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EXISTENTIALISM AND LITERATURE

A LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND.

IT might appear at first sight as if neutral countries in Europe had escaped the consequences of warfare and that their history during the last six years stood in enviable contrast to that of countries such as France and England. The contrast is, of course, glaring enough. The loss of life in Switzerland caused by bombardment during the war, deeply felt though it was throughout the whole country, was so insignificant in comparison with that of the belligerent countries as to be an impertinence to mention. Yet it may be said that in other respects all the main features of total warfare were reproduced in Switzerland and the country underwent the whole war 'situation' very much as if it had itself been at war, only every feature was far from reaching the intensity experienced by those actually at war.

The truth of this general statement may be tested in every dominant aspect. The fear of starvation (still a haunting spectre): the strict rationing system with its salutary effect on civilian *moral*: the press censorship: the black-out: *the fear of invasion* which at one moment led to panic and to mass evacuation of frontier towns. Above all an authoritarian government. Swiss democracy also went into temporary abeyance during this war. Minor instances could be multiplied. The demands made on the citizen army were greater than those imposed on the civilian worker who suffered more from taxation and interruption of his work than from the strain due to prolonged overtime in office or factory.

As for 'neutrality', the term was so deviously juggled with by the official opportunists in the Government that it lost all meaning long before the end of hostilities. Opinion was generally sympathetic to the Allies at the outbreak of the war. After the fall of France, however, a swing towards the apparent conqueror took place, especially in the French-speaking part of the country, and at that time many prominent people in other regions, too, uttered sentiments they would like to see deleted from 'the record' to-day. Yet apart from circles more *vichyssois* than Vichy itself and others who appeared to the impartial but imperfectly informed observer to be actually eager to smooth the way for the advancing Axis, the people as a whole underwent something of a moral *redressement*. Many became conscious perhaps for the first time that there was a Swiss way of life different from the German and worth preserving at the cost of great sacrifice. This was strikingly evident in that part of the country speaking a German dialect. There were, too, acute and inspired observers who foresaw a Russian victory long before Stalingrad. Of the last-minute enthusiasm aroused by the Allied victory,

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the less said the better.

What social and cultural changes have been brought about by the war it is difficult to say, even in such a rough-and-ready survey as this. There has no doubt been a swing towards the left, but Switzerland still offers in spite of increasing standardization so much variety and local peculiarity that nothing profitable can be advanced in such general terms. The war provided an unique opportunity for local talent and ways of feeling to assert themselves. Yet little or nothing emerged that would interest outsiders, except perhaps a kind of popular cabaret which kept before the public the consciousness of Swiss democracy which found no outlet in the heavily censored press. (It should not be forgotten that the greater part of Switzerland is hampered by the linguistic difficulty. The people think and speak in dialect but write in German. Attempts to write in the dialect have never amounted to much).

During the war a number of new firms began publishing books to supply the vacancy left by the complete cessation of imports from abroad. A remarkably high proportion of all the books published were translations of American and English best-sellers. Indeed every one who wished to be able to take part in smart conversation over cocktails went and bought the expensive volumes of Norah Lofts and Warwick Deeping, Louis Bromfield, and such-like trash. The lack of resistance (observable in pre-war France, too) of the public used to a relatively high standard of fiction is remarkable and deserves closer analysis. Further evidence may be sought in a pamphlet published in Zürich in 1944, Max Wildi's *Der Angelsächsische Roman und der Schweizer Leser,* which corroborates in many ways the description given in *Fiction and the Reading Public*. The spate of best-sellers included 'literary' figures such as Hemingway, Steinbeck, Wolfe, Charles Morgan (the latter, as in England, a great favourite in the universities).

Even so short a summary of the Swiss cultural scene as this cannot afford to ignore the theatre, and, in particular, the Schauspielhaus in Zürich. Performances were given of plays which have since been seen in London, such as Wilder's *The Skin of our Teeth*. In the absence of any authoritative centre of opinion, this play was perhaps extravagantly praised. A good performance was given to attentive audiences of *The Family Reunion*. Some of the 'difficult' plays of Shakespeare, such as *Measure for Measure,* had successful runs. When Sartre's *Les Mouches* was performed (in German) it met with little comprehension. Even the press of the French-speaking part was at a loss for comment. It was only when the French frontier opened to allow passage to a small trickle from the Parisian press that the Swiss literary public took up the latest fashion and flooded the reviews with articles on Existentialism.

The following remarks are largely a comment on the way this new fashion has developed in Switzerland. They are offered for comparison with the mode as it develops in London.

The scantiness of the material available here makes it impossible to give an adequate account of the growth and extent of the

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'movement' in France. It seems at present to have filtered down to the journalistic level and to occupy roughly the position held by surrealism during and after the last war. On the literary side it is taken to be the principal expression of a whole generation and group of writers including Céline, Malraux, Camus, in France. Moravia, Rensi, Vittorini, in Italy, and Kafka, Jaspers, Heidegger, Jünger, in Germany, and Faulkner, Hemingway, Steinbeck, in America. But whereas surrealism when it was not mere verbiage was above all an aesthetic program, existentialism strictly speaking is a serious philosophical system, expounded in formal philosophical terms by Sartre, who is a 'professional' philosopher, in *L'être et le Néant*. Of the full implications of this philosophy, not having read the above work, I shall not attempt to speak. Sartre himself, in an article addressed to the newspaper public, speaks of people 'qui eussent pu trouver des principes de pensée et des *règles de conduite* dans cette philosophie' (my italics). And he defines his position as follows:

> 'Tout objet a une essence et une existence. Une essence, c'est-à-dire un ensemble constant de propriétés; une existence c'est-à-dire une certaine présence effective dans le monde. Beaucoup de personnes croient que l'essence vient d'abord et l'existence ensuite: que les petits pois, par exemple, poussent et s'arrondissent conformément à l'idée de petits pois et que les cornichons sont cornichons parce qu'ils participent à l'essence de cornichon. Cette idée a son origine dans la pensée religieuse; par le fait, celui qui veut faire une maison, il faut qu'il sache au juste quel genre d'objet il va créer: l'essence précède l'existence; et pour tous ceux qui croient que Dieu créa les hommes, il faut bien qu'il l'ait fait en se référant à l'idée qu'il avait d'eux. Mais ceux mêmes qui n'ont pas la foi ont conservé cette opinion traditionnelle que l'objet n'existait jamais qu'en conformité avec son essence, et le dix-huitième siècle tout entier a pensé qu'il y avait une essence commune à tous les hommes, que l'on nommait *nature humaine*. L'existentialiste tient, au contraire, que chez l'homme—et chez l'homme seul—l'existence précède l'essence.
>
> Cela signifie tout simplement que l'homme *est* d'abord et qu'ensuite seulement il est ceci ou cela. En un mot, l'homme doit se créer sa propre essence; c'est en se jetant dans le monde, en y souffrant, en y luttant qu'il se définit peu à peu; et la définition demeure toujours ouverte; on ne peut point dire ce qu'est *cet* homme avant sa mort, ni l'humanité avant qu'elle ait disparue'.

The point I wish to make is that the existence of such formal declarations has led to the discussion of Sartre's *literary* work in philosophical terms and in so doing has (as was to be expected) blurred the difference in literary value of his novel, *La Nausée* and of his play, *Les Mouches*. The two works illustrate in neat antithesis the legitimate and illegitimate use of philosophical ideas in literature. No *à priori* aesthetic is involved in this use of 'legitimate'. I mean

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merely that in *La Nausée* philosophical speculation is present in such a way as to integrate and vivify the whole, whereas in *Les Mouches* the philosophical theses remain outside the play which thus lacks inner coherence. I shall make no attempt to assess the validity of the philosophy as something existing in its own right, but shall confine myself to what is *there* in the literary works in the way in which it is there. (A similar problem, it may be noted in passing, has hindered the literary evaluation of Kafka where the *Meditationen* and other religious and philosophical *obiter dicta* are simply read into the novels).

Although *La Nausée* was published as early as 1938, I have the impression that it was not immediately taken up in England, and as copies are probably as hard to obtain by readers of *Scrutiny* as they are here, I make no apology for the explanatory detail given along with the critical commentary.

The book is cast in the form of a diary of a thirty-year-old Frenchman, Antoine Roquentin, who has returned to France from extensive travels in Central Europe, Africa and the Far East (in the course of which he had a tormented love affair with a girl named Anny which terminated by mutual consent), to write the biography of the Marquis de Rollebon, a figure who played a prominent part in European political intrigue in the eighteenth century. The diary records the incidence of a state of anxiety and loathing which its author progressively discovers to have as its object existence itself. He throws up his research, makes a vain attempt to recapture the past with Anny, and finally leaves the northern port where he has been living and retires to Paris to write up his adventure in the form of a novel as the sole way out of the impasse in which he finds himself.

> 'Un livre. Naturellement ça ne serait d'abord qu'un travail ennuyeux et fatigant, ça ne m'empêcherait pas d'exister ni de sentir que j'existe. Mais il viendrait bien un moment où le livre serait écrit, serait derrière moi et je pense qu'un peu de sa clarté tomberait sur mon passé. Alors peut-être que je pourrais, à travers lui, me rappeler ma vie sans répugnance. Peut-être qu'un jour, en pensant précisément à cette heure-ci, à cette heure morne où j'attends, le dos rond, qu'il soit temps de monter dans le train, peut-être que je sentirais mon coeur battre plus vite et que je me dirais: c'est ce jour-là que tout a commencé. Et j'arriverais —au passé, rien qu'au passé—à m'accepter'.

Before turning to the philosophical crisis which forms the kernel of the book I should like to deal first with a feature which predisposes the reader in favour of the sincerity of the central predicament. It is that the town in which the diarist becomes aware of his crisis is so successfully evoked. (Just as with Kafka the minute and solid rendering of the phantasmagoria renders it credible). An especially fine passage is the description of a provincial Sunday. The financial and social hierarchy, the shops, the empty conversations, the official morning and unofficial late afternoon promenades,

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the whole air of stultification is given in a narrative which moves powerfully forward as it develops the inner crisis. This description paves the way for a parallel scene in which Roquentin visits the municipal art gallery where portraits of the leading figures of the period (1875-1910) in which the financial prosperity of the town was assured are all hung together. He describes these portraits one by one with ironical comments and speculations on their subjects' private lives. Before leaving the gallery he salutes these figures 'Adieu beaux lys tout en finesse dans vos petits sanctuaires peints, adieu beaux lys, notre orgueil et notre raison d'être, adieu Salauds'.

The abruptness of this judgment is designed to pull us up and make us consider the standards on which the work is based and in the framework of which the philosophical problem is posed. The total negation of value (for it extends from the social order to every act of the hero) seems to bring Sartre into relation with Céline whose *Voyage au bout de la Nuit* was defended, if I remember rightly, in *Scrutiny* as the aesthetic cultivation of the negative values.

This has always seemed to me too easy a way out. We are bound to pass judgment. Either we accept with the hero the view that all and especially man is vile, or we judge the hero to be suffering from a limitation of response and we look to see if the author endorses the hero and if he does, we pronounce the work also limited. (The same problem confronts us with Kafka: the novels contain a good deal that is *merely* neurotic). To decide at what points the author ceases to identify himself with his hero is a delicate task. At one point at least the author himself takes over the hero's role. I am thinking of a passage where the hero is seized with an inexplicable anger against 'tous les humanistes que j'ai connus'. Here again we note the abruptness of the outburst. It may not be out of place to recall here the skill with which Smith is 'placed' in *The Root and the Flower*. This is not to demand that all philosophical novels be as suave in their irony as those of Myers. It is more than a question of intellectual manners: it suggests a want of certainty, of poise, or at least a want of detachment. At this point the work of art is pierced through and the author becomes a polemist. (I may have missed the point here, for in the article from which I have already quoted Sartre writes: 'En ai-je dit assez pour faire comprendre que *l'existentialisme n'est pas une délectation morose, mais une philosophie humaniste de l'action, de l'effort, du combat, de la solidarité*?').

The one positive value which runs through the book is the constant direction of the intelligence towards a sober scrutiny of things as they are. The hero is constantly on the alert against the pitfalls emotional and intellectual which beset those who are preoccupied with their own states of mind. The critical intelligence displayed in the passages in which he exposes the limitations of historical biography is fine. On the strength of this alone Sartre can claim to be something more in literature than a *N.R.F.* 'find' or the centre of a fashion. On the other hand the love of speculation to my mind occasionally runs away with him. There is an interesting

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chain of reasoning on the nature of 'adventure' which while pleasing in itself strikes me as not welded into the work. More doubtful is the sentimental treatment of a well-known jazz tune—*Some of these days*. It is the hero's favourite record. He has it played twice over just before he leaves the town for ever. It is this tune which precipitates the thought of writing up his life in novel form. What, we may well ask, are the extraordinary qualities to be attributed to this melody? The secret apparently is that it does not exist, it *is*. The author, supposed by the hero to be a New York Jew, and the singer, a Negress, have in collaborating, succeeded where the hero failed. ('Et moi aussi j'ai voulu *être*'). 'En voilà deux qui sont sauvés: le Juif et la Négresse . . . Ils sont un peu pour moi comme des morts, un peu comme des héros de roman; ils se sont lavés du péché d'exister'.

These remarks come at the very end of the book after the author has established his position with respect to existence and being, and the apparent absurdity and extravagance of this treatment of the jazz tune is to some extent diminished—though not enough to evade the charge of sentimentality. The climax of the novel comes when the hero at last understands what has been happening to him. He had at first wondered whether 'la nausée' were a pathological state. Now he realizes 'ce n'est plus une maladie, ni une quinte passagère: c'est moi'. Sitting in the public gardens in front of a tree he has a sudden vision:

> Jamais, avant ces derniers jours je n'avais pressenti ce que voulait dire 'exister'. J'étais comme les autres, comme ceux qui se promènent au bord de la mer dans leurs habits de printemps. Je disais comme eux 'la mer *est* verte; ce point blanc, là-haut, c'*est* une mouette' mais je ne sentais pas que ça existait, que la mouette était une 'mouette-existante'; à l'ordinaire l'existence se cache. Elle est là, autour de nous, en nous, elle est *nous*, on ne peut pas dire deaux mots sans parler d'elles, et, finalement, on ne la touche pas. Quand je croyais y penser, il faut croire que je ne pensais rien, j'avais la tête vide, ou tout juste un mot dans la tête, le mot 'être'. Ou alors je pensais . . . comment dire? Je pensais l'*appartenance*, je me disais que la mer appartenait à la classe des objets verts ou que le vert faisait partie des qualités de la mer. Même quand je regardais les choses, j'étais à cent lieues de songer qu'elles existaient: elles m'apparaissaient comme un décor. Je les prenais dans mes mains, elles me servaient d'outils, je prévoyais leur résistance. Mais tout ça se passait à la surface. Si l'on m'avait demandé ce que c'était que l'existence, j'aurais répondu de bonne foi que ça n'était rien, tout juste une forme vide qui venait s'ajouter aux choses du dehors, sans rien changer à leur nature. Et puis voilà: tout d'un coup, c'était là, c'était clair comme le jour: l'existence s'était soudain dévoilée. Elle avait perdu son allure inoffensive de catégorie abstraite: c'était la pâte même des choses, cette racine était pétri dans de l'existence. Ou plutôt la racine, les grilles du jardin, le

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banc, le gazon rare de la pelouse, tout ça s'était évanoui; la diversité des choses, leur individualité n'était qu'une apparence, un vernis. Ce vernis avait fondu, il restait des masses monstrueuses et molles, en désordre—nues d'une effrayante et obscène nudité.

Je me gardais de faire le moindre mouvement mais je n'avais pas besoin de bouger pour voir, derrière les arbres, les colonnes bleues et le lampadaire du kiosque à musique, et la Velléda, au milieu d'un massif de lauriers. Tous ces objets . . . comment dire? Ils m'incommodaient; j'aurais souhaité qu'ils existassent moins fort, d'une façon plus sèche, plus abstraite, avec plus de retenue. Le marronnier se pressait contre mes yeux. Une rouille verte le couvrait jusqu'à mi-hauteur, l'écorce, noire et boursouflée, semblait de cuir bouilli. Le petit bruit d'eau de la fontaine Masqueret se coulait dans mes oreilles et s'y faisait un nid, les emplissait de soupirs; mes narines débordaient d'une odeur verte et putride. Toutes choses, doucement, tendrement, se laissaient aller à l'existence commes ces femmes lasses qui s'abandonnent au rire et disent: 'C'est bon de rire' d'une voix mouillée, elles s'étalaient, les unes en face des autres, elles se faisaient l'abjecte confidence de leur existence. Je compris qu'il n'y avait pas de milieu entre l'inexistence et cette abondance pâmée. Si l'on existait, il fallait *exister jusque là,* jusque'a la moisissure, à la boursouflure, à l'obscénité. Dans un autre monde, les cercles, les airs de musiques gardent leurs lignes pures et rigides. Mais l'existence est un fléchissement. Des arbres, des piliers bleu de nuit, le râle heureux d'une fontaine, des odeurs vivantes, de petits brouillards de chaleur qui flottaient dans l'air froid, un homme roux qui digérait sur un banc: toutes ces somnolences, toutes ces digestions prises ensemble offraient un aspect vaguement comique. Comique . . . non: ça n'allait pas jusqu'à là; rien de ce qui existe ne peut être comique, c'était comme une analogie flottante, presque insaissable avec certaines situations de vaudeville. Nous étions un tas d'existants gênés, embarrassés de nous-mêmes, nous n'avions pas la moindre raison pour être là, ni les uns ni les autres, chaque existant confus, vaguement inquiet, se sentait de trop par rapport aux autres. *De trop*: c'était le seul rapport que je pusse établir entre ces arbres, ces grilles, ces cailloux. En vain cherchais-je à *compter* les marronniers, à les *situer* par rapport à la Velléda, à comparer leur hauteur avec celle des platanes: chacun d'eux s'échappait des relations où je cherchais à l'enfermer, s'isolait, débordait. Ces relations (que je m'obstinais à maintenir pour retarder l'écroulement du monde humain, des mesures, des quantités, des directions) j'en sentais l'arbitraire; elles ne mordaient plus sur les choses. *De trop,* le marronnier, là en face de moi un peu sur la gauche. *De trop* la Velléda . . .

Et *moi*—veule, alangui, obscène, digérant, ballotant de mornes pensées-*moi aussi j'étais de trop.*

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And so the passage goes on, establishing triumphantly point after point. Whatever be the philosophic standing of the vision, it is emphatically *there,* tied down by the tree and the gardens and the man experiencing the vision, and there in a different way from the affirmations of the explanatory article from which I have quoted. The remarkable vitality of this central passage as it stands in the novel—the culmination of a series of preparatory episodes—clinches the argument: here is an example of the 'legitimate' use of philosophical speculation in a literary work. Evidently the knowledge that these statements can be maintained in a strict philosophical context reinforces the exhilaration felt on reading them in their context in the novel. But the reinforcement is extraneous: it merely confirms the impression the novel gives that the author was in earnest, and giving his best, that the crisis was a 'real' one, etc. What is really more important to point out is that this passage is moving even to those who have never heard of existentialism and to those who are never likely to grasp the philosophy.

The problem, though intricate, is familiar to readers of *Scrutiny,* if not to the worthy contributors to Swiss (and other?) reviews, who have been writing long articles on the 'philosophy' of *La Nausée.* It sounds paradoxical to say so in the light of so many apparent 'statements', but the philosophy is just not there to be prolonged and systematized. What stands in the novel has relations to the rest of the novel. The astonishing quality of this first novel—though it contains weaknesses not mentioned in this commentary—is muffled and disguised by the philosophical approach.

* * * *

Just so, the same approach muffles and disguises the weaknesses of *Les Mouches,* first performed in Paris during the occupation. (The philosophical approach was doubled with the political: many critics claimed to find in the play an allegory or at least comment on the political situation).

The more we concentrate on *Les Mouches,* the less sure we become that it contains in itself the standard by which it is to be judged and the more we are justified in looking outside the play for the originating idea. *Les Mouches* does not possess inner coherence, its own secret. Instead of a world moving according to its own laws we are faced with something more like a marionette show—and occasionally there are bits of bare-faced juggling. The author is illegitimately pulling the strings and intervening like his own Jupiter to bring off firework effects. But if the author is deliberately faking, it may be because he was himself uncertain. At any rate, time and time again when we read the play we are pulled up by doubt as to what is intended. The effect produced in one part seems to make nonsense of what has gone before.

In choosing to use any legend with a load of consecrated associations, the author's difficulty is to indicate how much of the incrustations of the past he wishes to retain and how much he wishes us to dismiss from our minds. That is, his central problem is to lay

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down the axes, to make it plain into what universe of discourse he is inviting us to enter. Sartre draws on the Greek story. We are to take as 'facts' the return of Agamemnon from Troy, his murder by Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra, Orestes' escape, and Electra's servitude in the palace at Argos, Orestes' return and vengeance on the guilty couple. But this story comes to us in a framework of Greek religious ideas. There is the notion of the curse on the Atrides, and the rival religious views represented by the Erinnyes and Apollo. But Sartre, while seeming to accept the first (though, as we shall see, with his own modifications) wishes to offer us a quite different axis for the second. In the place of Apollo we have Jupiter, god of flies and death. This is Sartre's innovation and everything depends on his establishing a meaning for Jupiter. Unless he can fill him with meaning, make him stand for something, this character remains an empty bottle with a misleading label. So let us first follow the indications given by Sartre of the way we are to take his main axis. Jupiter appears first as a man with an enormous beard who has been shadowing Orestes ever since the latter learned from his Paedagogos that he was the son of Agamemnon. When the two travellers accost the god on their arrival at Argos he passes himself off as an Athenian citizen, though his indiscreet remarks allow Orestes to make a shrewd guess as to his identity. He is used by Sartre as a piece of expository machinery, to recall what has passed in the last fifteen years. The play opens on the fifteenth anniversary of the murder of Agamemnon. From Jupiter we learn of an innovation in the Greek story. The people of Argos in Aeschylus' play repudiate the murder and are only cowed by Aegisthus because they are too old to fight and the young men are not yet demobilized. Jupiter in Sartre's play explains that the people of his Argos are morally accomplices in the murder. They were bored. 'Argos n'était qu'une petite ville de province, qui s'ennuyait indolemment sous le soleil'. Agamemnon had made the great mistake of not satisfying their appetite for blood by allowing them to witness capital executions. So they did not warn Agamemnon of his danger on his return. 'Ils voulaient voir une mort violente'. The satisfaction of this passion aroused the most violent erotic feelings: 'la ville tout entière était comme une femme en rut'. Orestes is scandalized by the success of Aegisthus and incriminates the gods. Jupiter explains that the gods turned the situation 'au profit de l'ordre moral'. His notion of moral order is the rule of fear. A specimen member of the community is brought forward to illustrate the case. An old woman—one of those who went into erotic ecstasy on the night of the murder—confesses that she has spent the succeeding fifteen years in repentance and has brought up her children to repent and even her grandson is 'déjà pénétré par le sentiment de sa faute originelle'. And when Jupiter declares that repentance is 'ta seule chance de salut' we seem to be in a Christian world—and here is the first incoherence. Are we to think of Jehovah when Sartre says Jupiter? Hardly, I suppose, unless a little cheap satire is intended. For Jupiter shows a con-

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tented cynicism. He does not seem to be put out by the fact that this reign of fear and repentance (though what repentance can mean in this context is far from clear) is engineered by Aegisthus who himself has not the slightest trace of the second feeling whatever he may have of the first. 'Ca se compte au poids, le repentir', says Jupiter. Further, this change from a light-hearted people to one eaten with remorse—they are visited by a plague of flies (though Jupiter says they are merely to be taken as a symbol)—is highly gratifying to Jupiter. 'La peur, la mauvaise conscience ont un fumet délectable pour les narines des Dieux'. While we are puzzling our heads about where we stand Jupiter tells us that the gods 'ont des secrets douloureux'—and at once we are clear that whatever is meant by Jupiter cannot be anything superhuman, since Sartre knows his secrets. At any rate he attempts to influence the action—to persuade Orestes of the danger of meddling in the affairs of Argos—by purely human means plus a little magic—in this case a formula for getting rid of flies. 'Je suis charmeur de mouches à mes heures'.

In our search for the right attitude to take up we are confronted with the Pedagogue and his rationalism. For him there are no such things as gods. If this man lives in any world, we must place him somewhere in the Greco-Roman period—if this is what we are to understand by his quoting Pausanias. His function has been to give to Orestes 'la liberté d'esprit'. Orestes had been hitherto a willing pupil and had absorbed a good deal of archaeology and aesthetics and some philosophy. Yet Sartre does not allow us to get any insight into the kind of education Orestes has acquired. We are to take it that the knowledge he has obtained leaves him with a feeling of detachment from everything. Yet if we are to evaluate his dissatisfaction with it and to contrast 'la liberté d'esprit' with 'l'acte libre' which Orestes commits in murdering his mother, that is, if we are to make sense of the central notion of the play, we need to know more of what real liberty isn't. All we get from Sartre is the judgment that the old slave's philosophy ignored the aspects of reality which most interest Sartre. And if this character is meant to be more than a piece of machinery, we have another incoherence in the play.

'Laisse ta philosophie. Elle m'a fait trop de mal'. What hurts Orestes is not so much the philosophy itself as the conflict which has arisen within him since he learnt of his birth. The very terms in which his schoolmaster praises him accentuate this conflict. 'A présent vous voilà jeune, riche et beau, avisé comme un vieillard, affranchi de toutes les servitudes et de toutes les croyances, sans famille, sans partrie, sans religion, sans métier, libre pour tous les engagements et sachant qu'il ne faut jamais s'engager'. For it is this very liberty which pains him. 'Moi, je suis libre, Dieu merci. Ah! comme je suis libre. Et quelle superbe absence que mon âme'. This, I believe, is the central tenet of his philosophy. But in the play the idea cannot swim in the context of a series of propositions. It stands in the context of the situation set up. That is, it works

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here as a man's dissatisfaction with his own state of mind. For the attraction of an opposite mode of life torments him. 'Ils y a des hommes qui naissent engagés: il n'ont pas le choix, on les a jetés sur un chemin, au bout du chemin il y a un acte qui les attend, *leur* acte; ils vont, et leurs pieds nus pressent fortement la terre et s'écorchent aux cailloux'. The first form the longing takes is to possess his own soul by belonging intimately to a community. But this idea is twined with another: that *his* act is to murder his mother. 'Ah! s'il était un acte, vois-tu, un acte qui me donnât droit de cité parmi eux; si je pouvais m'emparer, fût-ce par un crime, de leurs mémoires, de leur terreur et de leurs espérances pour combler le vide de mon coeur, dussé-je tuer ma propre mère'. At first these thoughts appear to him as dreams—'ce sont des songes'—it requires the meeting with his mother and sister to determine him to take these thoughts seriously and to decide to play his predetermined part in the curse.

Electra is a relatively unambiguous figure. She seems to correspond fairly closely to the formula pronounced by Orestes: 'Il y a d'autres, des silencieux, qui sentent au fond de leur coeur le poids d'images troubles et terrestres; leur vie a été changée parce que, à sept ans . . .' She is sustained, not by fear and repentance, but by hatred and revolt, by the dream of vengeance on her oppressors. She also shares with her author the feeling of nausea at the sight of the disgusting flesh of humanity. In her case we may suppose it due to the suppression of her natural feelings. She has no friend, no object for her love, and no imaginative field for her amorous fancy. So when her brother tells her of the carefree life of the people of Corinth who know little of remorse and who 'font ce qu'ils veulent et puis après ils n'y pensent plus' she conceives a plan which she puts into execution later. At the moment she is interrupted by the entry of Clytaemnestra.

Clytaemnestra is a doomed woman: 'moi qui ai ruiné ma vie en un seul matin'. But she sees that Electra resembles her and she foresees that Electra is heading for a similar catastrophe. The old queen takes a certain pleasure in feeling herself a doomed criminal. But what seems to have broken her down is not the murder of her husband—'ce n'est pas la mort du vieux bouc que je regrette'—but the loss of her son, Orestes. Incidentally she throws a different light on the consequences of being involved from that seen by Orestes. 'Tu sauras enfin que tu as engagé ta vie sur un seul coup de dés, une fois pour toutes, et que tu n'as plus rien à faire qu'à hâler ton crime jusqu'à ta mort. Telle est la loi, juste et injuste, du repentir'. In a similar burst of second sight she gives Orestes the same advice as that already given by Jupiter. But Orestes has now made up his mind to stay.

Whatever we may think of the first act of this play, we can hardly doubt that it is externally an extremely carefully organized piece of work—the incoherences—if I am right in finding any—are due to a want of inner organization. Sartre keeps close to his theme and the act produces a serious effect, however uneasy the

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unresolved contradictions may make us. The second act, however, gives way to 'theatre' in the bad sense of the word. Sartre has chosen to dramatize the self-hypnotism of the people of Argos who have been led by Aegisthus to believe that on the anniversary of the murder of Agamemnon the dead come back for the day to visit the living. What seems to interest Sartre most in this fantasy is the return of the cuckold to his erring wife. But this is a theme common in folklore and the episode may have a significance which escapes me.

Jupiter introduces the two travellers to the spectacle. He rebukes the schoolmaster who mocks the popular superstition: '(ils) ont les narines remplies de leurs propres odeurs, ils se connaissent mieux que toi'. One is inclined to murmur, 'qui est-ce qu'on trompe ici?' The people certainly go into ecstasies of self-disgust—'je suis un égout, une fosse d'aisance', says one. And Jupiter is delighted. The high priest calls on the dead to feed on the living. Orestes wishes to leave, finding it too disgusting, but Jupiter compels him to stay. Aegisthus, who shares Sartre's ontological interests, explains the status of the dead. 'Son âme est un midi torride, sans un souffle de vent, rien n'y bouge, rien n'y change, rien n'y vit, un grand soleil décharné, un soleil immobile la consume éternellement. Les morts ne sont plus—comprenez-vous ce mot implacable—ils ne sont plus, et c'est pour cela qu'ils se sont faits les gardiens incorruptibles de vos crimes'.

Electra interrupts the orgy by appearing in a gala frock. She tells the astonished crowd about the happy cities of Greece and shows them that the dead have no objection to her dancing and argues *ex silentio* that they approve. She is just beginning to convince the crowd when Jupiter does a little magic and the stone which was blocking the entrance to the cavern from which the dead were supposed to emerge starts to move and crashes against the temple steps. When the crowd turns against Electra, Jupiter calls the whole scene 'une histoire morale—les méchants ont été punis et les bons récompensés'. Orestes turns from him with 'va-t-en' and goes to his sister. I should like to learn the object served by making a mountebank out of the god. At least it would seem to disqualify him for the serious part he is given later on.

Electra refuses to run away. She is waiting for her brother—someone who has 'le crime et le malheur dans le sang'. She is at first rather disappointed when Orestes reveals himself. This brings Orestes to a fresh realization of his state. 'Qui suis-je et qu'ai-je à donner, moi? J'existe à peine: de tous les fantômes qui rôdent aujourd'hui par la ville, aucun n'est plus fantôme que moi . . . j'ignore les denses passions des vivants'. He repeats his resolve to stay. 'Je veux mes souvenirs, mon sol, ma place au milieu des hommes d'Argos . . . je veux être un homme parmi les hommes'.

In his desperation Orestes prays . . . and prays to Jupiter (Zeus)! It appears that in spite of his sceptical upbringing he believes in the 'roi du ciel' who is the upholder of Good and forbids bloodshed! He asks God for a sign to show him that he should

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submit and go away. Jupiter obligingly performs a bit of wizardry, and lights up the sacred stone. But this 'miracle' produces the opposite effect. We thought Orestes was 'dégagé' before—now he declares that something has died in him and that he has found his way . . . to Argos. He takes a sentimental farewell of his past life and decides to burst like a wedge into the heart of the city. At the same time his physical appearance changes: 'tes yeux ne brillent plus, ils sont ternes et sombres'. He determines to take on himself the rôle of 'voleur de remords': in that way he will acquire 'droit de cité'. He will not expiate, however, he will merely take over this artificial repentance and twist its neck. The first step is to murder Aegisthus and his own mother. Electra shows him the way. But Jupiter, still the amateur detective, has overheard their plans and rushes off to warn the victim.

This ludicrous pantomime is the real crisis of the play. It strikes me as arbitrary and unconvincing. It may be a paradigm of an excellent philosophical system, but as art—it doesn't even begin to exist. Once again one does not know whether to take Electra's gushing admiration of her brother's gesture at its face value or with a pinch of salt. Once again we ask, 'qui est-ce qu'on trompe ici?'

The second tableau of this act brings us to the murders and certain explanations of some of the mysteries that have been perplexing us, though the explanations, as we shall see, give rise to new difficulties. Electra has led Orestes to the throne room in the palace. They hide behind the throne when two guards enter and remain there when Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra come in. The usurper is tired of his rôle: 'voici quinze ans que je tiens en l'air, à bout de bras, le remord de tout un peuple'. He envies his wife her real remorse: 'je te les envie, ils te meublent la vie'. He even at moments begins to believe in the fictions of his own creation. He feels emptier than Orestes.

In this state of mind he receives a visit from Jupiter who has to turn on the fireworks to get himself recognized. Jupiter expresses his satisfaction at the people's fear of him: 'je n'ai que faire d'être aimé'. His mission is to warn Aegisthus that if he ceases to be a loyal subject and allows Orestes to kill him he will be doomed to sit on the judicial bench in hell for the rest of eternity. Is this an irresponsible joke? Is Jupiter incapable of seeing the future, or is it possible to escape the curse? Can Aegisthus escape his fate . . . and Orestes? We must suppose that Jupiter supposes so—and he should know—or shouldn't he? 'Crois-tu que je quitte l'Olympe sans motif?' The odd thing is that Jupiter fails in all his attempts to intervene.

The difficulties raised in pursuing this idea are numerous. But new ones are to follow. Jupiter unbosoms himself: 'le premier crime, c'est moi qui l'ai commis en créant les hommes mortels'; assassinations merely advance the inevitable hour. So this is the creator of mankind! In what universe, we may ask? Sartre cannot mean 'really'—and he is not giving us the Greek view of Jupiter.

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We are placed in an irresponsible bubble. Jupiter goes on: he likes murders if the murderers feel remorse. Orestes hasn't the shadow of remorse. (This is a problem in itself). Jupiter doesn't appear to realize that Orestes is listening a few metres away. Then Jupiter changes his ground, finding his arguments of no avail. He tries to encourage Aegisthus by telling him he is a god on earth. 'Nous faisons tous les deux régner l'ordre, toi dans Argos, moi dans le monde'. And both suffer from the knowledge that: 'les hommes sont libres et ils ne le savent pas'. And when Aegisthus objects that he is the chief victim of his hoodwinking of his subjects, Jupiter says in effect: what else am I? 'Depuis cent mille ans je danse devant les hommes . . . tant qu'ils ont les yeux fixés sur moi, ils oublient de regarder en eux-mêmes'. What would happen if men turned away? Jupiter does not say, which is a pity, for our cardinal doubt is just this: is Jupiter a person or an idea, an image created by fear-loving, slavery-loving men? 'Qui suis-je, sinon la peur que les autres ont de moi?' says Aegisthus. 'Qui donc crois-tu que je sois?' replies Jupiter. The problem—it is one after Sartre's own heart—is: what is the status of a fear no one any longer feels? Jupiter seems to enjoy an independent existence, although for some unexplained reason he feels condemned to spend his time enslaving man. Why does he get such enormous satisfaction from this 'lente et sombre danse devant les hommes'? He complains that it is wearisome, but 'tant qu'il y aura des hommes sur cette terre, je serai condamné à danser devant eux'. Who condemned him? It is very tiresome of Sartre to keep back this corner of his mythology from us. And how all this business can be called keeping order, I can't imagine. Here the absence of the idea of 'good' is remarkable. What was the good Orestes found incarnate in Jupiter?

Jupiter now reveals his last 'secret'. As soon as a man knows he is free Jupiter cannot touch him. 'Quand une fois la liberté a explosé dans une âme d'homme, les Dieux ne peuvent plus rien contre cet homme-là. Car c'est une affaire d'hommes, et c'est aux autres hommes . . . à eux seuls . . . qu'il appartient de le laisser courir ou de l'étrangler'. At this point one feels sympathy with the bewildered reviewers who, in default of any other coherent explanation, turned to the contemporary scene and saw Jupiter as a Nazi god and Aegisthus as the prototype of Hitler or Pétain, both of whom made great play with the word order. But both of these august personages, we presume, failed to see the likeness.

At any rate, when Orestes springs forward it is as if Jupiter had not spoken. Aegisthus lets himself be murdered with a sigh of relief. Now comes another difficulty. Aegisthus is puzzled by Orestes' want of remorse. 'Why should I feel any?' replies Orestes, 'Je fais ce qui est juste'. Not God's idea of justice, certainly, 'La justice est une affaire d'hommes, et je n'ai pas besoin d'un Dieu pour me l'enseigner'. Let us leave Aegisthus expiring with a curse on his lips and pass on to Clytaemnestra. In what sense was it just to kill her? This is the problem which preoccupied Aeschylus: it seems to have no meaning for Sartre. Electra, at any rate, sees

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no reason for the murder. The shock of reality makes her doubt her hate: 'Pendant des années, j'ai joui de cette mort par avance, et, à présent, mon coeur est serré dans un étau. Est-ce que je me suis menti pendant quinze ans?' She is obviously going to be a prey to remorse.

Orestes returns from butchering his mother, still without a shred of remorse, but shaken by the indecency of the act. 'Je suis libre, Electre; la liberté a fondu sur moi comme la foudre'. But to us, as to Electra, it looks more like determinism. At least no clear meaning as yet attaches to the word. His liberty consists in performing *son acte*. 'J'ai fait *mon* acte . . . et cet acte était bon'. We may wonder why. He says, j'en rendrai compte'. We may wonder: to whom? Electra is terrified of the flies which she identifies with the Erinnyes whom she in turn identifies with the goddesses of remorse. Brother and sister decide to shelter from them in Apollo's temple. But who is Apollo in Sartre's pantheon? Apollo could shelter the Greek Orestes because he was morally responsible for the murder.

Sartre makes a further illegitimate borrowing from Aeschylus in the opening of the third act, where the Erinnyes are waking from sleep. They have mounted guard over the young couple. At least, it seems inconsistent to give them such an active, independent rôle. The flies were, if you like, a convenient symbol of a parasitic fear, at bottom willed by the victims. Sartre's treatment of the Furies reminds one of the *Eumenides* where these female monstrosities represent a power outside men, coming from the superseded pre-Olympian gods. Their function in *Les Mouches* is to tear the flesh of their victims, they appear indifferent to their minds. I could go on accumulating inconsistences. For example, why do they respect Apollo?

Before examining the final scene, it may be as well to pause and take stock. First: what is the nature of the objections so far raised? It is not that Sartre has or has not adopted Greek ideas, it is not that his own ideas seem right or wrong, but that the different ideas presented do not come together imaginatively. They do not form an imaginative whole. They do not create a credible world that has dimensions that can be explored indefinitely. It is not that there seems no answer to the questions raised, but that the questions should be raised at all is the result of artistic failure.

Here one feels sympathy with those critics who turned to Giraudoux for light. Giraudoux is notorious for a calculated irresponsibility. He plays with ideas 'for their own sake'. His plays are not 'about' anything. They are collections of 'bright ideas' or amusing fancies. The most dreadful bathos comes when Giraudoux threatens to relate them to a series of serious positions, to give them an axis, to take responsibility for them. Fortunately Giraudoux never quite fulfils his threats. But Sartre does appear to have serious intentions. His previous work gives him a claim on our attention, raises expectations in us that his play will prove more than an elegant game. Let us therefore pursue with patience the search

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for a meaning.

One wonders at the interest the flies' sisters show in Electra, for in one night her feelings have altered her whole body till she looks like her mother. 'En une seule nuit ton foie, tes poumons et ta rate se sont usés, ton corps n'est plus qu'une grosse misère'. To judge by a similar passage in a short story in *Le Mur* (*Erostrate*, p. 83), this transformation is to be taken literally. She comes to full realization of her position in the course of this scene. The stages are clear and well developed and require no comment. She has not the power, the will, the courage, or whatever it takes, to be free. So she inevitably remains under Jupiter's rule.

When Jupiter enters the Furies acknowledge him as their master, but for Orestes, though he calls him 'roi des Dieux', he is only a *bonhomme*. But Jupiter insists that he is the creator and he uses a megaphone to convince us. In his self-advertisement he claims to be the author of the universe. And now for the first time he introduces the moral values: 'car le monde est bon: je l'ai créé selon ma volonté et je suis le Bien. Mais toi, tu as fait le mal . . .' True, he identifies 'le Bien' with things and qualities of things, such as weight, coolness, etc. Jupiter invites Orestes to return to nature. Orestes replies: 'tu es le roi des Dieux, Jupiter, le roi des pierres et des étoiles, le roi des vagues de la mer. Mais tu n'es pas le roi des hommes'. What, we may ask, has such a god to do with the tyrannical cravings of the Jupiter Sartre has revealed in this play? How does man come to interest him in this way? There seems no real parallel between his ordering of the planets and his ordering of Argos.

Let us turn to Orestes. He appears to accept Jupiter's account of himself. Orestes accepts his position as an alien in the universe. For he recognizes no authority on earth or in heaven 'pour me donner des ordres'. Orestes calls himself an exile. But where can an exile from the universe go to? 'La nature a horreur de l'homme'. I suspect that this is some more of the philosophy. (Man is a vacuum, etc.). I do not know enough of Sartre's philosophy to do justice to his ideas . . . in his book on these ideas. But here, once again, we have to deal with the phrases *as they stand*. For us as literary critics the important thing to note is the increasing *vague*-ness of the language. 'La vie commence de l'autre côté du désespoir'. (Jupiter now seems to have forgotten his microphone speech and begins to feel his day is over. *Götterdammerung*? But he won't go down without a struggle). Orestes suggests a journey: Electra asks: where to? Orestes: 'Je ne sais pas; vers nous-mêmes. De l'autre côté des fleuves et des montagnes il y a un Oreste et un Electre qui nous attendent'.

This conception of liberty as withdrawal from the world, self-exploration—and *not* fraternity, rebirth of society, etc., as the political interpretation would require, prepares the way for the final argument: that Orestes can save his people as Christ saved the world, by taking over the sins of the world. The last touch of comedy is applied by the re-entry of the pedagogue who exclaims

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on seeing the Furies, 'qui sont celles-là? Encore des superstitions. Que je regrette le doux pays d'Attique, où c'était ma raison qui avait raison'. It is difficult to assess the point of this remark for we do not know what to include or to exclude in the notion of his *raison*. Is it that of Socrates-Plato? The reason which enables Sartre to philosophise and write the play? Let us once again take the character as a piece of machinery: he precipitates the crisis by opening the doors of the temple and allowing the infuriated mob to enter. He also lets in the sunlight which although essentially a part of nature and therefore essentially alien to Orestes, a function of Jupiter's power, yet seems to have an especial appeal for him. I suppose it is idle to think of Apollo in this context?

Orestes now gives the justification of his crime: 'c'est pour vous que j'ai tué'. That is, he had to kill his mother as the only way in which he could take on himself the general remorse. Christ did not have to murder his mother in order to take away our sins, he had to die himself. Sartre provides us with no access to his idea. If he has perceived some aspect of reality here, he has failed to relate it to any observable part of our experience.

The ending of the play reminds me of the Greek device called *deus ex machina*. For me his final words ring hollow: 'Adieu, mes hommes, tentez de vivre: tout est neuf ici, tout est à commencer'. This is not a severe verdict. Who can honestly say that he was convinced by Sartre's account of their previous state? It was never more than a construction: we took it on trust, hoping it would work, that the imaginative effect would recompense the initial surrender of belief. The final *coup de théâtre*: Orestes going God knows where in a swarm of flies, followed by shrieking she-fiends is in keeping with the general impression of the play. We don't bother to ask: where did he go to? because for us he never really started. We do not ask what becomes of the famous idea of liberty: it has no more substance than the tune the Greek Pied Piper played on his flute. The rats may have been real, but they disappear conveniently into the fairy story's happy ending.

* * * *

I have perhaps made rather too heavy weather of a play that may, after all, not have been intended very 'seriously'. My excuse must be the pursuit of a critical moral and the irritation aroused by its almost general neglect in the narrow literary world of war-time Switzerland. It is proof of no untoward pessimism to suppose that the English reader may, if he has not already, soon have abundant cause to feel a like irritation as soon as the fashion-purveyors get to work on Existentialism.

H. A. MASON.

Basle, August, 1945.

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THE CONTROLLING HAND: JANE AUSTEN AND 'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE'[1]

THE remarkable thing in *Pride and Prejudice* as in the other novels of Jane Austen is the mind of Jane Austen. If it could be proved—and Mrs. Leavis has shown[2] very clearly that it cannot—that the 'real' Jane Austen who lived in Chawton was, as Mr. Forster ruefully suggests, a person of rather trivial intelligence and crude manners, the proof would be irrelevant to our reading of the novels. For as literary critics we are concerned only with the mind that appears in the novels and which we can reconstruct from their language. What is distinctive about this mind is its control: the union of alertness to the many possible meanings of a human action with the steady power of making precisely defined statements of this ambiguity.

In *Pride and Prejudice,* particularly in the presentation of Darcy's character, Jane Austen shows an almost Jamesian awareness of the multiple ways of reading a man's behaviour. She conveys her sense of the possibility of very different interpretations of the 'same' action, as James often does, through dialogues which look trivial and which are extremely ambiguous. At the same time they are not merely confusing because Jane Austen defines so precisely the ironic implications of what is said and because she gradually limits the possibilities with which the reader is to be most concerned. So the book moves toward the 'more reasonable' interpretation at the climax, in which Elizabeth readjusts her whole view of her lover. There is in passing ambiguity aplenty, as anyone can see by looking over the earlier conversations between Elizabeth and Darcy. But as the reader goes on, he sees that he has been prepared for the climax by a skilful allowance for alternative 'readings' of Darcy's character, and he realizes that limits have been set on the relevant possibilities. By analysis of a few of these 'trivial' dialogues we shall see that both the range and the definition of ironic implications are realized through a finely controlled use of words.

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[1]This essay is one of a group to be included in a book on 'Integrity of Imagination'. The object of the book is to define integrity of imagination through analyzing a number of works of literature which have very different modes of organization. It is assumed that such integrity manifests itself in the particular ways a writer uses language. Hence the method of the following essay.

[2]*A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings*: (III) *The Letters,* Q. D. Leavis, *Scrutiny* XII, No. 2, Spring, 1944.

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What most satisfies a present-day reader in following the central drama is Jane Austen's awareness that it is difficult to 'know' any complex person, that knowledge of a man like Darcy is an interpretation and a construction, not a simple absolute. Like the characters of Proust, the chief persons in *Pride and Prejudice* are not the same when projected through the conversation of different people. The *snobisme* of Darcy's talk, like Swann's, changes according to the group he is with. Mr. Darcy is hardly recognizable as the 'same' man when he is described by Mr. Wickham, or his housekeeper, or Elizabeth, or Mr. Bingley.

It is the complex persons, the 'intricate characters', that require and merit interpretation as Elizabeth points out in the pleasant conversation in which she tells Bingley that she 'understands him perfectly':

> 'You begin to comprehend me, do you?' cried he, turning towards her.
>
> 'Oh! yes—I understand you perfectly'.
>
> 'I wish I might take this for a compliment; but to be so easily seen through I am afraid is pitiful'.
>
> 'That is as it happens. It does not necessarily follow that a deep, intricate character is more or less estimable than such a one as yours'.
>
> 'Lizzy', cried her mother, 'remember where you are, and do not run on in the wild manner that you are suffered to do at home'.
>
> 'I did not know before', continued Bingley immediately, 'that you were a studier of character. It must be an amusing study'.
>
> 'Yes; but intricate characters are the *most* amusing. They have at least that advantage'.
>
> 'The country', said Darcy, 'can in general supply but few subjects for such a study. In a country neighbourhood you move in a very confined and unvarying society'.
>
> 'But people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed for ever'.

Elizabeth's remark with its ironic application to Darcy indicates the interest which makes the book 'go' and shows the type of awareness we are analyzing. 'Intricate characters are the *most* amusing', because their behaviour can be taken in so many ways, because they are not always the same people. The man we know to-day is a different man to-morrow. Naturally, we infer, people will not be equally puzzling to every judge. Mr. Bingley and Jane find Mr. Darcy a much less 'teazing man' than Elizabeth does. It is only the Elizabeths, the adult minds, who will 'observe something new' in the 'same old' people.

The subtlety of this awareness of 'intricacy' and the way in which it is dramatically realized are nicely shown in the dialogue just quoted. As elsewhere in Jane Austen there is an irony beyond the immediate irony, a smile beyond the first smile. In the context

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of Elizabeth's later discoveries and of her naïve trust of Wickham, it is delightful to hear her assume that she is 'a studier of character'. There is a shade of aptness in Mrs. Bennet's silly rebuke.

The aura of implications which surrounds these early dialogues between Elizabeth and Darcy is complex enough to delight the most pure Empsonian. Take for example the dialogue in which Sir William Lucas attempts to interest Mr. Darcy in dancing:

> ...Elizabeth at that instant moving towards them, he was struck with the notion of doing a very gallant thing, and called out to her,
>
> 'My dear Miss Eliza, why are not you dancing?—Mr. Darcy, you must allow me to present this young lady to you as a very desirable partner—You cannot refuse to dance, I am sure, when so much beauty is before you'. And taking her hand, he would have given it to Mr. Darcy, who, though extremely surprised, was not unwilling to receive it, when she instantly drew back, and said with some discomposure to Sir William,
>
> 'Indeed, Sir, I have not the least intention of dancing—I entreat you not to suppose that I moved this way in order to beg a partner'.
>
> Mr. Darcy with grave propriety requested to be allowed the honour of her hand; but in vain. Elizabeth was determined; nor did Sir William at all shake her purpose by his attempt at persuasion.
>
> 'You excel so much in the dance, Miss Eliza, that it is cruel to deny me the happiness of seeing you; and though this gentleman dislikes the amusement in general, he can have no objection, I am sure, to oblige us for one half hour'.
>
> 'Mr. Darcy is all politeness', said Elizabeth, smiling.
>
> 'He is indeed—but considering the inducement, my dear Eliza, we cannot wonder at his complaisance; for who would object to such a partner?'.
>
> Elizabeth looked archly, and turned away.

'Mr. Darcy is all politeness': the statement, as Elizabeth might say, has a 'teazing' variety of meanings. Mr. Darcy is polite in the sense indicated by 'grave propriety', that is, he shows the civility appropriate to a gentleman—which is the immediate, public meaning of Elizabeth's compliment. But 'grave propriety', being a very limited form of politeness, reminds us forcibly of Mr. Darcy's earlier behaviour. His 'gravity' at the ball had been 'forbidding and disagreeable'. 'Grave propriety' may also mean the bare civility of 'the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world'. So Elizabeth's compliment has an ironic twist: she smiles and looks 'archly'. 'All politeness' has also quite another meaning. Mr. Darcy 'was not unwilling to receive' her hand. He is polite in more than the public proper sense; his gesture shows that he is interested in Elizabeth as a person. So her archness and her smile have for the reader an added ironic value: Elizabeth's interpretation of Darcy's manner may be quite wrong. Finally there is the embracing broadly comic

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irony of Sir William's action. 'Struck with the notion of doing a very gallant thing', he is pleasantly unconscious of what he is in fact doing and of what Elizabeth's remark may mean to her and to Darcy.

There is a similar cluster of possibilities in another conversation in which Darcy asks Elizabeth to dance with him:

> ...soon afterwards Mr. Darcy, drawing near Elizabeth, said to her—
>
> 'Do not you feel a great inclination, Miss Bennet, to seize such an opportunity of dancing a reel?'
>
> She smiled, but made no answer. He repeated the question, with some surprise at her silence.
>
> 'Oh!' said she, 'I heard you before; but I could not immediately determine what to say in reply. You wanted me, I know, to say "Yes", that you might have the pleasure of despising my taste; but I always delight in overthrowing those kind of schemes, and cheating a person of their premeditated contempt. I have therefore made up my mind to tell you, that I do not want to dance a reel at all—and now despise me if you dare'.
>
> 'Indeed I do not dare'.
>
> Elizabeth, having rather expected to affront him, was amazed at his gallantry; but there was a mixture of sweetness and archness in her manner which made it difficult for her to affront anybody; and Darcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by her. He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger.
>
> Miss Bingley saw, or suspected enough to be jealous; and her great anxiety for the recovery of her dear friend Jane, received some assistance from her desire of getting rid of Elizabeth.
>
> She often tried to provoke Darcy into disliking her guest, by talking of their supposed marriage, and planning his happiness in such an alliance.

We can find considerable 'amusement' in exploring the various tones of voice appropriate for reading Mr. Darcy's speeches. Elizabeth hears his question as expressing 'premeditated contempt' and scorn of her own taste. But from Mr. Darcy's next remark and the comment which follows it and from his repeating his question and showing 'some surprise', we may hear in his request a tone expressive of some interest, perhaps only gallantry, perhaps, as Elizabeth later puts it, 'somewhat of a friendlier nature'. We could hear his 'Indeed I do not dare' as pure gallantry (Elizabeth's version) or as a sign of conventional 'marriage intentions' (Miss Bingley's interpretation), if it were not for the nice reservation, 'He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger'. We must hear the remark in a tone which includes this qualification. This simultaneity of tonal 'layers' can be matched only in the satire of Pope, where again a sensitive reader will feel the impossibility of adjusting his voice to the rapidity of change in tone and the difficulty of representing by a single sound the

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several sounds he hears as equally appropriate and necessary. Analysis such as I have been making shows very clearly how arbitrary and how thin any stage rendering of *Pride and Prejudice* must be. No speaking voice could possibly represent the variety of tones which is conveyed to the reader by such interplay of dialogue and comment. For once a comparison with music may not be misleading. Reading Jane Austen may be rightly compared to hearing a Mozart opera, where the music, especially the orchestration, serves as a contrasting and enriching commentary (witty or serious) on the words of arias and recitatives and on the dramatic situation.

It would be easy enough to produce more examples of these dialogues each with its range of crisply differentiated overtones. The result is a 'richness', not the 'richness' of Shelley—which is only a name for the undefinable mass of references back of his adjectives and abstracts—but the richness coming from distinctly perceptible relations. When more speakers are present, the possibilities multiply; and they are wonderfully realized, as in the scene above or in the discussion of reading and feminine education, where Mr. Darcy's remarks produce whole sets of radiations as we relate them either to his own behaviour and supposed character or to the behaviour and character of Miss Bingley or Elizabeth.

But these conversations are not simply 'sets of ironic meanings'; they are, in more than the trivial sense, *jeux d'esprit*, the play of an adult mind. The sophistication they imply is of a kind which, as John Jay Chapman once suggested, is Greek and French, rather than English. The fun in Jane Austen's dialogue has a serious point; or rather, the fun *is* the point. The small talk is the focus for her keen sense of the variability of 'character', for her awareness of the possibility that the 'same' remark or action has very different meanings in different relations. And the ordered range of ironies is the proof of her immense literary power, of her ability to compel language to express this peculiar awareness.

We can see this control more clearly in the management of the dialogue in relation to the main sequence of *Pride and Prejudice*. By finely graduated steps we are led to form a new estimate of Darcy's character, a revision which is prepared for in part by the slow revelation of his altering attitude to Elizabeth. The refinement in this progress is, especially by modern standards, rather wonderful. Perhaps the best example is the scene in which one of the main signs of a change is Mr. Darcy's twice moving his chair. Through scenes of similar refinement the dialogue is delicately shaped toward Elizabeth's recognition that Darcy regards her differently and that she has herself suffered a 'change of sentiment' toward him. Though the sense of a rich texture of amusement is never lost, attention is being constantly directed toward the main alternative judgments of Darcy.

The main choices are defined for the reader in various ways. There is first the underlying reference to the symbolic abstractions of Pride and Prejudice. Naturally it would be, in Elizabeth's

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phrase, 'superlatively stupid' to read the novel as a set of illustrations of these or other Moral Passions. Only a few of the cruder scenes of the book approach this level: the more obvious of Miss Bingley's exhibitions of snobbery, Lady Catherine quizzing Elizabeth on the upbringing of her sisters, or Mr. Collins making his proposal—which might be labelled with some fairness as 'scenes of Pride or Pompousness'. But there is a value in the generalizing metaphor of Pride and Prejudice, as can be seen from the role of moral abstractions in Pope's *Moral Essays*. The *felt* ideas of Pride and Prejudice have a value in fixing the irony of many scenes in the novel. But this is not a matter of crude and overt reference as with the symbols of Ibsen.

It is not the title (except as any title sets up a rough expectation) that prepares us to view Mr. Darcy's 'proud' acts as susceptible of another interpretation; it is rather the drama of the opening ballroom scene, with its harsh exhibit of the way 'character is decided' in this society:

> . . . Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien; and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend.
>
> . . . His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again.

Within the scenes which follow there is much neater and more particular definition of choices through brief but explicit comment. So in the scene at Sir William Lucas's house there is the observation of Mr. Darcy's 'grave propriety' (his proud civility) over against the remark on his being 'not unwilling to receive' Elizabeth's hand. In the later dancing scene, the two views of Darcy's action are fixed as 'premeditated contempt' versus 'gallantry'. Though such defining labels are sparingly used and unobtrusively introduced, they are unmistakably there.

The choice of interpretations is sometimes defined only within a much larger context, but what is remarkable about Jane Austen is that the limitation can be so exactly located and settled. A rather bald example is the explanation given for the last of Mr. Darcy's puzzling silences. On earlier occasions there has always been the unpleasant possibility that Darcy's silence was another sign of his want of genuine politeness. ('. . . his civility was so far awakened as to enquire of Elizabeth after the health of her family'). Now, even

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after the pleasant meetings at Pemberley, he seems to be rudely silent. He shows 'more thoughtfulness, and less anxiety to please'. Later in a direct statement to Elizabeth, Darcy gives a more favourable account of his odd behaviour:

> 'Why, especially, [Elizabeth asks] when you called, did you look as if you did not care for me?'
>
> 'Because you were grave and silent, and gave me no encouragement'.
>
> 'But I was embarrassed'.
>
> 'And so was I'.

The alternative and pleasanter interpretation of Mr. Darcy's character is sometimes brought out more obliquely by means of a later scene which merely supplies a new setting for a previous remark or action. Mr. Darcy's remarks on his library seem in the context of the opening scenes sublimely smug, the simplest confirmation of our original prejudice:

> 'I am astonished', said Miss Bingley, 'that my father should have left so small a collection of books. What a delightful library you have at Pemberley, Mr. Darcy!'
>
> 'It ought to be good', he replied, 'it has been the work of many generations'.
>
> 'And then you have added so much to it yourself, you are always buying books'.
>
> 'I cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library in such days as these'.

But Mr. Darcy's words may be taken as coming from a proprietor, a man who has a just estimate of good things and a sense of his obligation as an inheritor of them. These possibilities, which seem remote enough when we first meet the above dialogue, become more than fancies as we read the scene in which Elizabeth is shown over Pemberley. Pemberley *was* a very 'good thing', reflecting the taste of the master who in his maintenance of the place and in his relations with his sister, his servants, and the villagers fulfilled all the responsibilities of a great proprietor.

It is important to note as another sign of the astute management of the novel, that in the original dialogue about libraries, as in many other instances, there is no direct comment which makes us take Darcy's behaviour in only an unpleasant sense. And when there is comment, as we have seen, it is mainly used to bring out the latent ambiguity without in any way resolving it. So, in general, the earlier Darcy scenes are left open in preparation for the climax of the book. At that point, Darcy does not have to be re-made, but 're-read'. The complete and rapid re-making of a character appears in an obvious form only in the later and lesser scenes of the novel.

The final definition of the possible views of Darcy's behaviour comes in the remarkable passage following Elizabeth's receipt of the letter from Darcy and in the similar passages on her thoughts after visiting Pemberley. The art of the book—which is another

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name for the control we have been describing—lies mainly in the preparation for these scenes and in the resolution within them of conflicting interpretations and attitudes. The passages connected with Darcy's letter present an odd, rather legalistic process. After the more obvious views of his behaviour and the possible alternatives are directly stated, the evidence on both sides is weighed and a reasonable conclusion is reached:

> After wandering along the lane for two hours, giving way to every variety of thought; re-considering events, determining probabilities, and reconciling herself as well as she could, to a change so sudden and so important, fatigue, and a recollection of her long absence, made her at length return home; . . .

To illustrate her manner of 'determining probabilities' we might take one of several examples of Darcy's pride. Immediately after Darcy has proposed to her, she describes his treatment of Jane in rather brutal language:

> . . . his pride, his abominable pride, his shameless avowal of what he had done with respect to Jane, his unpardonable assurance in acknowledging, though he could not justify it.

A little later, she reads Darcy's letter in which he explains that Jane had shown no 'symptom of peculiar regard' for Darcy. A 'second perusal' reminds Elizabeth that Charlotte Lucas had a similar opinion, and she acknowledges the justice of this account of Jane's outward behaviour. In much the same way she reviews other charges such as Darcy's injustice to Wickham or his objection to her own family's 'want of importance', and she is forced by the new evidence to draw 'more probable' conclusions.

Jane Austen does not make us suppose that Elizabeth has now simply discovered the 'real' Darcy or that an intricate person is easily known or known in his entirety, as is very clearly shown by Elizabeth's reply to Wickham's ironic questions about Darcy:

> . . . 'I dare not hope', he continued in a lower and more serious tone, 'that he is improved in essentials'.
>
> 'Oh, no!' said Elizabeth. 'In essentials, I believe, he is very much what he ever was'.
>
> While she spoke, Wickham looked as if scarcely knowing whether to rejoice over her words, or to distrust their meaning. There was a something in her countenance which made him listen with an apprehensive and anxious attention, while she added,
>
> 'When I said that he improved on acquaintance, I did not mean that either his mind or manners were in a state of improvement, but that from knowing him better, his disposition was better understood'.

It is wise not to be dogmatic about 'essentials', since in any case they remain 'as they were'. A sensible person contents himself with 'better understanding', that is, with 'more reasonable' interpretations.

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The judicial process by which Elizabeth 'determines probabilities' in reviewing Darcy's past actions is matched by the orderly way in which she later 'determines her feelings' toward him:

> . . . and the evening, though as it passed it seemed long, was not long enough to determine her feelings towards *one* in that mansion; and she lay awake two whole hours, endeavouring to make them out. She certainly did not hate him. No; hatred had vanished long ago, and she had almost as long been ashamed of ever feeling a dislike against him, that could be so called. The respect created by the conviction of his valuable qualities, though at first unwillingly admitted, had for some time ceased to be repugnant to her feelings; and it was now heightened into somewhat of a friendlier nature, by the testimony so highly in his favour, and bringing forward his disposition in so amiable a light, which yesterday had produced. But above all, above respect and esteem, there was a motive within her of good will which could not be overlooked. It was gratitude. Gratitude, not merely for having once loved her, but for loving her still well enough, to forgive all the petulance and acrimony of her manner in rejecting him and all the unjust accusations accompanying her rejection. He who, she had been persuaded, would avoid her as his greatest enemy, seemed, on this accidental meeting, most eager to preserve the acquaintance, and without any indelicate display of regard, or any peculiarity of manner, where their two selves only were concerned, was soliciting the good opinion of her friends, and bent on making her known to his sister. Such a change in a man of so much pride, excited not only astonishment but gratitude—for to love, ardent love, it must be attributed; and as such its impression on her was of a sort to be encouraged, as by no means unpleasing, though it could not be exactly defined. She respected, she esteemed, she was grateful to him, she felt a real interest in his welfare; and she only wanted to know how far she wished that welfare to depend upon herself, and how far it would be for the happiness of both that she should employ the power, which her fancy told her she still possessed, of bringing on the renewal of his addresses.

In this beautifully graded progress of feeling, from 'hatred' or any 'dislike' to 'respect' to 'esteem' to 'gratitude' and a 'real interest' in Darcy's 'welfare', each sentiment is defined with an exactness which would be pedantic if separable from the habit of mind of Elizabeth (and of Jane Austen and the public she addressed).

If we refer these sentiments to the larger context of the novel, we shall see that each has also a dramatic definition which makes more precise the meaning given here. 'Respect', for example, points back to Elizabeth's reaction on discovering that Darcy had been just and honest in his relations with Jane and with Wickham. She had assured herself of his 'respectable' qualities through revising her judgment after reading his letter. 'Esteem'—'somewhat of a

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friendlier nature'—came when she visited Pemberley and learned of his qualities as landlord and master: 'In what an amiable light does this place him!' thought Elizabeth. She had felt 'gratitude' after reading his letter, but only in the limited sense of being pleased at so flattering a proposal. 'Gratitude' in the wider sense it has here affected her first as she viewed Darcy's portrait: his 'regard' seemed to be turned particularly on her. She now finds especially 'gratifying' his behaviour to her aunt and uncle and his desire to introduce her to his sister. 'Gratitude' shades finally into an 'impression' which 'could not be exactly defined', a phrase which does not indicate a failure to make distinctions, but the recognition that finer distinctions are to be made. Elizabeth's response to Darcy is not just conventional 'love', but this special kind of gratitude. Her sister Jane is conventionally in love with a conventional lover. The dramatic equivalent of this distinction is Elizabeth's most lovable remark, 'she only smiles, I laugh'. Such a beautiful correspondence between explicit distinction and dramatic expression suddenly shows us what is meant by integrity of imagination.

Nothing in the novel, I think, makes more clear the degree and pervasiveness of the writer's control than the complete and precise definition of 'sentiments' which we have been describing. 'Artistic conscience', which like 'integrity of imagination' has become an almost meaningless term, finds again a meaning when referred to writing of this sort. Readers of eighteenth-century literature will want to add that such a fine sense of responsibility in the use of language, especially in the making of moral distinctions, does not belong to Jane Austen alone, but also to her family, to the eighteenth-century writers who were her teachers, and to her readers, who were prepared for such refinement 'even in a novel'.

The control without the sense of intricacy in character and without the resultant ironies would not be very remarkable. (The characters in a mediaeval interlude or an average thriller are 'beautifully defined' because there is so little sense of complexity). So we may describe the relative inferiority of the latter third of *Pride and Prejudice* as a lowering in the awareness which makes the earlier parts of the novel so remarkable. There is no longer the same intricacy of character nor the same sense of the difficulty of finally 'knowing' a person. The change comes, as we should expect, in the part of the book which is most influenced by the conventions of melodramatic fiction: the country girl seduced by the rake, the search for the runaway lovers, the hero (wealthy and modest) who settles all financial problems, the proud parent (an aunt in this case) who makes a final attempt to part the hero and heroine, and a happy reunion with marriage.

In these later scenes Darcy and Elizabeth appear as less complex characters, and the explanation of their behaviour is made in simpler terms than in the measured reinterpretation at the climax of the book. Darcy tells Elizabeth that he was once a 'proud' man, but that now he is 'humble':

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> 'Such I was, from eight to eight and twenty; and such I might still have been but for you, dearest, loveliest Elizabeth! What do I not owe you! You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you, I was properly humbled'.

A little later Elizabeth tells Mr. Bennet that Darcy is 'perfectly amiable', though she does allow apparently for some 'proper pride'. Elizabeth, who like Darcy has been very honest in admitting her mistakes, now urges Darcy to take a sentimental view of his past:

> 'You must learn some of my philosophy. Think only of the past as its remembrance gives you pleasure'.

And Darcy replies in kind:

> '*Your* retrospections must be so totally void of reproach, that the contentment arising from them, is not of philosophy, but what is much better, of ignorance'.

(This account of Elizabeth's behaviour, if accepted, kills the main point of the first part of the book—that Elizabeth had in fact been badly prejudiced). There is no sign in these remarks of the ironic reflection—almost inevitable—that both of them are at least very changed persons.

With the diminished sense of complexity in character appears the notion that even supposedly complex persons can be 'really known'. In the same speech in which Elizabeth tells Mr. Bennet that Darcy is 'perfectly amiable', she adds, 'You do not know what he really is'. The implied assumption here is very different from that in her more measured remarks to Wickham, that 'in essentials . . . he is very much what he ever was . . . but from knowing him better his disposition was better understood'. We now have simple sureties in place of such 'reasonable' interpretations. A less simple view of how a man's character is known has appeared in one of her earlier defences of Darcy, her remarks to her aunt and uncle as they approach Pemberley:

> . . . she gave them to understand, in as guarded a manner as she could, that by what she had heard from his relations in Kent, his actions were capable of a very different construction; and that his character was by no means so faulty, nor Wickham's so amiable, as they had considered in Hertfordshire.

Though Elizabeth speaks 'in a guarded manner' in order to conceal the source of her information, her central statement shows very well the assumption that character (at least in its complex forms) is 'known' in the sense that we make an interpretation of actions. Without the observation that 'his actions were capable of a very different construction', the remarks would still be 'guarded'; but they would show a much simpler mode of judgment. A few pages later we meet the shrewd suggestion that our 'constructions' may vary according to what we want to believe. When it becomes

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'evident that Darcy was very much in love with' Elizabeth, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner have a new interest in establishing his merits:

> Of Mr. Darcy it was now a matter of anxiety to think well; and, as far as their acquaintance reached, there was no fault to find. They could not be untouched by his politeness, and had they drawn his character from their own feelings, and his servants' report, without any reference to any other account, the circle in Hertfordshire to which he was known, would not have recognized it for Mr. Darcy. There was now an interest, however, in believing the housekeeper; . . .

But in spite of their interest, they do not find Mr. Darcy simply faultless. Their friends in Lambton

> . . . had nothing to accuse him of but pride; pride he probably had, and if not, it would certainly be imputed by the inhabitants of a small market-town, where the family did not visit.

The more adult view of the knowability of character shown in these earlier judgments of Darcy almost disappears in the closing episodes of the novel. It is hardly necessary to observe that there is no longer the same opportunity for the exercise of a complex control of language.

While making such distinctions of quality, it would be absurd to suggest that in the later chapters of *Pride and Prejudice* there are no signs of the mind of Jane Austen. We still come on ironic asides which remind us of the alertness and the more complex honesty of the earlier scenes. One glancing remark, for example, suggests that the final picture of Darcy might have been less simply perfect (Darcy has just been saying how well Bingley had accepted his confession of his part in separating Bingley and Jane):

> Elizabeth longed to observe that Mr. Bingley had been a most delightful friend; so easily guided that his worth was invaluable; but she checked herself. She remembered that he had yet to learn to be laught at, and it was rather too early to begin. In anticipating the happiness of Bingley, which of course was to be inferior only to his own, he continued the conversation till they reached the house.

In one of the most satisfying sentences in the novel, we are reminded that this happy ending is not simply happy:

> Miss Bingley's congratulations to her brother, on his approaching marriage, were all that was affectionate and insincere.

But we may still say that as an organic work controlled by certain assumptions and expressing a corresponding kind of sensibility, the book is substantially complete with Elizabeth's change of 'sentiment'. The rest of the novel does not have quite the same integrity:

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we do not find everywhere as in the evaluation-sequence the pressure of one and the same mind.

In showing how Jane Austen achieved this control through dramatic speech and comment, I have not made any systematic attempt to point out the conditions outside the writer which helped make her art possible. Taking for granted the existence of such conditions and their importance, I have been concerned primarily with the resultant use of language as seen in the product. But use of language is a social as well as a personal operation, which may easily be illustrated in Jane Austen's case by brief reference to one of these conditioning factors. In common with her contemporaries she enjoyed the belief that some interpretations of behaviour were more reasonable than others, a belief which includes the familiar assumption that 'most minds' (in fact, those of a limited literate public) worked in much the same way. We have seen what is meant by a more reasonable interpretation from our review of Elizabeth's judgments of Darcy and herself. Reasoned judgments of this type offer certainties on which people can act; they are the product of much experience and slow weighing of probabilities. The certainty is an achieved certainty.

The belief that some certainties can be reached is one of the conditions which make possible the control we have been studying. As a consequence, the ambiguities in Jane Austen do not multiply indefinitely. Tracing them does not merely give us a headache but leads to a precise outlining of the alternatives and to a practical resolution. With complex persons and situations the resolution is reached slowly and with difficulty. But there are people and situations about which adult persons cannot disagree. Mrs. Bennet is a 'woman of mean understanding'; and without any doubt whatever Mr. Collins is pompous and conceited, and Miss Bingley is a snob. The 'fixed' characters make up a second set of certainties in the novel which remind the reader that in the world of this fiction double meanings have very clear, if crude, limits. Mr. Collins, Mrs. Bennet, Lady Catherine, and others of this group should not be regarded as 'less real' or as 'inadequately developed'—criticisms which at best are irrelevant to this novel. These fixed characters are an expression of the same mind which is exhibited in the beautiful management of the central sequence of *Pride and Prejudice*. They are further manifestations of the characteristic grasp of the novelist, of Jane Austen's way of taking and stating experiences.

REUBEN A. BROWER

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CORRESPONDENCE :

RILKE, GEORGE AND 'RE-INTEGRATION'

TO THE EDITORS OF SCRUTINY.

Sir,

It is very welcome at this moment that *Scrutiny*, while remaining essentially a review of English letters, should attempt to assess the value of such important Continental poets of our time as Rilke and George. Mr. Enright's articles on these writers and Hölderlin (who, in a way, can also be regarded as a contemporary) are sensitive and sensible and very useful in view of much fashionable verbiage written about them in Germany and elsewhere. But there are obvious limitations to his approach. 'Willst du den Dichter verstehn, musst du in Dichters Lande gehn' ('If you wish to understand the poet you must go to the poet's country'). Physically this is not possible just now, but spiritually it is indispensable for any real understanding. *Scrutiny* critics know this very well when they are dealing with the great English tradition, with its deep roots in English life and thought; it is this, in fact, which constitutes *Scrutiny's* permanent contribution to literary criticism. It seems evident that any foreign literature should be treated similarly. But Mr. Enright has only occasional references of this kind and does not attempt to discuss his authors in the context of the German tradition. Moreover, he tends to minimize those aspects of their work which may be called 'religious', and thus he does not recognize that some of the 'fuss' to which they have given rise is an expression not only of a German, but of a European, dilemma.

That there is some sort of relation between literature and belief or (to use the comprehensive but elusive German word) 'Weltanschauung' is a commonplace. Mr. Eliot has tried to come to grips with the problem in a complicated note to his essay on Dante. Dr. Leavis has so far avoided a statement and chosen to remain within the boundaries of 'humanism'. But a consideration of W. B. Yeats' and Mr. Eliot's later poetry makes it clear that these poets who alone among their contemporaries have written major English poetry, have felt this question to be particularly urgent.

In Germany this has been felt to be so for a long time. There, the tension between the humanist and the religious elements of our civilization has been very strong ever since the prodigious flowering of German humanist culture round about 1800 and has been most influentially represented by that 'decided non-Christian', Goethe. At the same time it should not be forgotten that most Germans seem to be constitutionally unable to be sceptics or agnostics. Much of modern German thought can, in fact, be regarded as the reaction of people who cannot live without a faith to that general loss of faith which is the dominant feature of modern European history. It seemed at first as if Philosophy could fill the gap, and the triumph

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of Hegelianism seemed to have settled this question. Not for long, however. Not much remained of this impressive structure after Schopenhauer and Nietzsche had delivered their devastating attacks.

By then the disintegration of our world had made rapid progress: 'Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold'; and artists found themselves in hopeless isolation, no longer supported by communal beliefs. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of them attempted to fix the centre of a new world in art itself. The ground was, of course, prepared by Wagner. To his powerful influence must be added that of Nietzsche and Hölderlin, whose interpretations of Greek culture stressed the close historical connection between art and religion, between poetry and prophecy.

All this forms part of the 'soil'—to use L. C. Knights's suggestive metaphor in a recent *Scrutiny*—out of which contemporary German poetry has grown (just as the comprehensive spiritual pattern of an earlier stage of our civilization nourished the poetry of the Elizabethans and the Metaphysicals). George turned into a veritable poetical prophet and founded a sect. Now it is easy to ridicule the habits of his followers or the qualities of Maximin, his youthful deity. But it should not be forgotten that his insistence on the values of Greek humanism did something towards the keeping up of cultural standards in Germany at a time of their general decline. What must invite our criticism is his confidence in having reconstructed our entire spiritual universe from the sphere of art.

Rilke was trying to do the same. Mr. Mason and Miss Butler have clearly shown that Rilke, when he speaks about mankind in general (as he so often does), is thinking first and foremost of the poet, who bestows eternity on vanishing substance by transforming the visible world into the invisible word. An earlier idea of his, expressed at length in the *Stundenbuch* and with particular boldness in the still unpublished *Tuscan Diary*—that God does not stand at the beginning, but at the end of time, and that it is the function of the artist to create Him—tends in the same direction.

But Rilke, unlike George, did not find this belief satisfactory. So far from founding a new cult, he never ceased to introduce new questions and doubts into his own structure of thought and feeling. Mr. Mason has, indeed, little difficulty in showing that Rilke's most characteristic attitude is ambiguity. He was for ever wavering between an exaggerated humanism and a terrified humility. In one passage man is the raison d'être of the universe, in another he is overawed by the angel ('Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich'[1]) and forlorn in the infinite spaces ('Wer, wenn ich schriee, hörte mich denn aus der Engel Ordnungen?'[2]). Destiny, he says—perhaps it can be avoided by the poet ('vielleicht ist der Dichter ausserhalb alles Schicksals gemeint'[3]), but why then does he 'long for Destiny'[4]? Rilke spoke above all for himself when he wrote:[5]

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[1] *Duino Elegies*, I.
[2] *Ibid.*

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> Sein Sinn ist Zwiespalt. An der Kreuzung zweier
> Herzwege steht kein Tempel für Apoll.
>
> ('His mind is division. At the crossing of two heart-ways there's no temple for Apollo').

It is this ambiguity which makes it possible for so many contradictory interpretations of Rilke's work to be advanced. In reality his importance lies just in this: that he fearlessly went to the furthest limits in one direction and that he was too scrupulous an observer to report having found what was not there. The symbols which he brought back from his explorations (the doll, the saltimbanques, the death-world of the Xth Elegy) are poetically highly successful. George on the other hand depends to a large extent on Christian, more specifically Catholic, symbolism (*cf.* his pilgrimage to Maximin's Bethlehem), but achieves his greatest poetical success in poems written before his religious experiences, such as that matchless one quoted by Mr. Enright: 'Komm in den totgesagten park und schau'.

Considerations such as these could lead us straight to a discussion of the spiritual situation in Germany. *Scrutiny*, in upholding the traditions of European civilization, cannot afford to neglect this intricate question. George's and Rilke's central aim—re-integration—will certainly engage the minds of those who survive the present German ordeal. Another German poet, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, in turn a personal friend of George's and Rilke's, shared all their problems and conflicts (without, however, embodying them in major poetry, except perhaps in his earliest work). At the end of his life, in a masterly address at Munich University,[6] Hofmannsthal formulated a balanced creed based on a synthesis of humanism and Christianity, where art is not, indeed, supreme, but is an integral part of a harmonious universe. At one time Hofmannsthal's influence in Germany was great and this may be so again in the future, at least among those who, like the students of the same University, are longing for a 'new spiritual Europe'.[7]

Yours sincerely,

December, 1944. W. SCHENK.

OUR REVIEWER REPLIES:

I am grateful for this opportunity to reply to Mr. Schenk's letter, since the questions he raises are of the utmost importance at a time like the present when, in the absence of any common religious faith, poetry is encouraged to assume the character of

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[3]Preface to Rilke's translation of Guérin's *Centaur*.
[4]*Duino Elegies*, IX.
[5]*Sonnets to Orpheus*, First Part, III.
[6]*Cf.* his collection of essays, *Die Berührung der Sphären*.
[7]*Cf.* their manifesto of February, 1943.

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apocalypse. His complaint that insufficient attention has been given in *Scrutiny* to the context in the German tradition of thought and letters of the poets he mentions is to some extent alleviated by his own remarks. For my own inadequateness in this direction I can only offer the excuse that I regarded what I have written on Rilke, George and Hölderlin less as complete and definitive statements of their position in literature (without exception the articles in question had their origin as reviews of specific English publications), than as preliminary skirmishes: my intention has been to sketch out roughly the boundaries beyond which the reader new to Rilke (say) should not allow his fancy to roam. And Mr. Schenk will agree with me that the mass of critical work on these poets accessible to English readers (to say nothing of that in German) is of a nature likely to evoke in those who are in sympathy with *Scrutiny* and its critical methods feelings of distaste and dark memories of Middleton Murry's *Blake*. Such readers, in particular, will acknowledge the fact that an appreciable amount of demolition is a necessary preliminary to the study of a poet as tempting as Rilke.

I am well aware that there is more to be said about the poetry of George than I said in my short sketch in *Scrutiny* (Summer, 1944). Apart from this, there is a great deal one could say, in connection with both George and Hölderlin, about the influence which Greece (or, rather, a varying Idea of Greece) has had on German literature and thought from Winckelmann to the present day—but Miss E. M. Butler has written a large book, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, on the subject. And, incidentally, Miss Butler's book seems to me typical of that kind of scholarship—a whole mass of interesting and useful information almost wholly unleavened by any enlightening critical comment. I haven't the time, nor *Scrutiny* the space, to retail this kind of information, and I have always assumed that interested persons will turn to the books under review and find there most of the relevant background and influences (Hamburger's introduction to his translations of Hölderlin, Morwitz on George's influential position in the Germany of his time, Miss Butler on Rilke's development out of the rather precious decadence of his earlier, imitative work).

But I do not think I have in any very serious sense slurred over this question of context in the case of Rilke. Indeed, I should say that the important characteristics of the 'spiritual context' in which Rilke lived and worked are to be deduced from precisely the subject which has been my chief concern—namely, the diversity of interpretation which his work has received. For that context itself was one of diverse interpretations of *life*—it was, to use Mr. Schenk's term, the 'European dilemma', which since Rilke's time has solidified rather than resolved itself. Rilke's critics and commentators show us clearly the philosophical perplexity and social insecurity of the age, but they indicate it through their weakness as critics and commentators—the unhappy way in which their personal perplexities and needs prevented them from approaching Rilke's poetry in the spirit of unbiassed clarity which is essential

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to their profession. If it weren't for their obvious distress of mind and the fact that one cannot make much money this way these days, I should be tempted to apply to them the epigram on Kant's commentators from the *Xenien*:

> 'Tis strange how one man's wealth the need of many assuages:
> And when a monarch builds, the hodmen get good wages.[1]

I grant there is an element of truth in Mr. Schenk's statement that 'some of the "fuss" to which they have given rise is an expression not only of a German, but of a European, dilemma;' what I do not admit is that it is these poets' work in itself which has given rise to all the fuss. It is like the fuss over the character of Hamlet—it was not Shakespeare who really gave rise to this fuss, it was Coleridge and Hazlitt and Bradley, and probably you and I as well if we read the play in a not sufficiently disinterested manner.

That I have tended 'to minimize those aspects of their work which may be called "religious",' is true: it was what I set out to do. My interest is in the *poetry* of these writers. I should like to suggest that if you read their work *as poetry*, receiving what they have to give in a spirit of critical appreciation rather than of philosophical yearning, you will find there something better described as a *Lebensweisheit*, a 'wisdom of life', borne in upon you by the cogency of their poetic qualities—than as a set philosophy, or a religion which prescribes for you Saints' Days and services and a moral code for everyday application. These words of Rilke's, referring to his *Sonnets to Orpheus*, represent in the simplest possible terms what happens—or should happen—at the 'receiving end':

> there is something in the very nature of these poems, in their condensation and abbreviation (frequently stating lyrical totals, instead of setting out the stages necessary to the result), that makes them more likely to be grasped by the inspiration of one similarly focussed than generally 'understood' . . . Where a darkness remains, it is of a kind that requires not explanation but inclination.[2]

And—another warning to commentators—a poet's conscious 'mission' may not coincide with the final message of his poetry. 'Ein volk ist tot wenn seine götter tot sind' ('a people is dead when its gods are dead') is a magnificent sentence of George's, whose ambition it was to re-create those gods in Germany. This ambition, this mission, certainly colours his poetry, colours it deeply, but does it *shape* it? And aren't preconceived notions about George as a national prophet likely to bewilder the reader or even lay him open to disappointment when he reaches the written word of the poetry, lovely though it may be? I suggest that many a poet remains a poet in spite of himself, and that George is such a poet. His best poetry will always enchant us, but the figure of the High

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[1] H. W. Nevinson's *Goethe: Man and Poet*.
[2] Translated by J. B. Leishman from the *Briefe aus Muzot*.

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Priest bathed in the incense and emulous verses of his disciples is already a little ludicrous, and as a successful re-creator of gods George is a long way behind Sankey and Moody.

No, though poetry has a public function its composition remains a private affair, and the prose explanations of Yeats's book, *A Vision,* neither help us very much to appreciate his poetry nor help his poetry to fulfil its public function. For Yeats *has* a mission, the mission of every artist worthy of the name, the nature of which can hardly be discussed now. My point is simply this—that we should not run away with the idea that only the *bona fide* philosopher can have a *Sendung,* a mission (though this is probably better than the idea that only the politician can have one); a 'mission', in the sense in which I applied the word to Yeats's poetry, does not have to be genuinely philosophical in order to be valuable. Hence many of Rilke's 'interpreters', in their eagerness to find what is not there, are blind to what is being offered them. I am inclined to believe that the poet who could be used to the best advantage in the cultural training of post-war Germany is the one who said 'Ich habe nie über das Denken gedacht' ('I have never thought about Thought'). And it was also Goethe who spoke of the difference in function between the poet and the philosopher in words which ought to be framed and hung over the bed of every man of letters who fancies himself as an interpreter of poetry:

> If imagination did not originate things which must ever be problems to the understanding, there would be but little for the imagination to do.[3]

Another of Goethe's aphorisms may serve to bring the discussion to bear more directly on Rilke. Man is formed, he said, 'Erleuchtetes zu sehen, nicht das Licht' ('to see the Illuminated, not the Light'). What Rilke describes are the 'illuminated things'—things seen bathed in the light of a very remarkable imagination controlled by several comparatively simple and comprehensible ideas (see *Rilke and Hölderlin in Translation, Scrutiny* for Spring, 1944)—not the nature of the Light itself. That, alas, is still left to personal deduction, and though it is very possibly true that, to quote Mr. Schenk, 'much of modern German thought can, in fact, be regarded as the reaction of people who cannot live without a faith to that general loss of faith which is the dominant feature of modern European history', it does seem grossly unfair that they should take it out on their poets who, after all, are at liberty to feel, with Goethe, that 'he who has art or science has religion too. He who has neither art nor science had better have religion'.

Literary criticism of the interpretative kind will only begin to be redeemed from confusion when its exponents realize how unscrupulous a poet may be in his work, how much craft there is in poetry as well as art: for one thing, he may emulate the atheist architect designing an impressive cathedral and write excellent

[3] *Conversations with Eckermann,* July 5, 1827.

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poetry on a religious motive which, in the matter of personal belief, may mean absolutely nothing to him, and furthermore—which is more to the point, for I do not suggest that the German poets in question are of this cynical, free-lance variety—his poetry will inevitably be at odds with whatever prose declarations of belief he may give, since the way a poet 'thinks' in poetry is continually being moulded and subtilised and (from the philosopher's point of view) perverted by factors which are comparatively inactive when thought is expressed in prose.[4]

Goethe said to Jacobi in a letter, 'I cannot be satisfied with only one way of thinking. As poet and artist I am a polytheist', and I think it very likely that few important poets do think in one way when they are writing poetry. And when a hectic cloud of exegesis (the kind of thing we rather unfairly call 'teutonic') has gathered about a poet as about Rilke, I think the best service a critic can render both poet and audience is to do as I have attempted to do, even at the penalty of a certain over-simplification—to abstract the main tenor of the thought so that the reader (without expecting everything to relate back directly to those simple theorems) may have a few clear landmarks to guide him through the poet's work.

That we all hope for a 'new spiritual Europe' goes without saying. But perhaps the most terrible aspect of the spiritual condition not only of Germany but of the world in general to-day is the continually dwindling influence of the 'cultured intellectual'. that kind of man who is best equipped to wield an influence for good. Rilke, George and Hofmannsthal may well turn out to be of little immediate use to those who find themselves attempting to 're-educate' the German people—assuming that the Vansittartites do not succeed in placing education solely in the hands of the firing squads of an Army of Occupation—and I should think Goethe would be their best hope with, among modern writers, the earlier work of Thomas Mann coming more readily to hand than poetry. Even those who, seeking 're-integration' rather than an elementary re-education, desire whatever may be possible in the way of 'a balanced creed based on a synthesis of humanism and Christianity, where art is not, indeed, supreme, but is an integral part of a harmonious universe' may find Goethe a less ambiguous teacher than Hofmannsthal.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

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[4] *cf.* a passage from T. S. Eliot's essay on Dante, section 2, which might be useful to students of Eliot's own recent poetry: 'We are not to take Dante for Aquinas or Aquinas for Dante. It would be a grievous error in psychology. The *belief attitude* of a man reading the *Summa* must be different from that of a man reading Dante, even when it is the same man, and that man a Catholic'. And the *belief attitude* of the man *writing* the *Divine Comedy* must be different from that of the man writing the *Summa*.

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IMAGERY AND MOVEMENT:

NOTES IN THE ANALYSIS OF POETRY.

SHAKESPEARE, of course, has his own miraculous complexity. Nevertheless, the effects just examined[1] serve in their striking way to enforce a general point. What we are concerned with in analysis are always matters of complex verbal organization; it will not do to treat metaphors, images and other local effects as if their relation to the poem were at all like that of plums to cake. They are worth examining—they are there to examine—because they are foci of a complex life, and sometimes the context from which they cannot be even provisionally separated, if the examination is to be worth anything, is a wide one.

But to return now, after the caveat of this extreme instance, to something simpler. There is nothing of the complexity of 'pity like a naked new-born babe' about the eighth line of the following stanza:

> Busie old foole, unruly Sunne,
> Why dost thou thus,
> Through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?
> Must to thy motions lovers seasons run?
> Sawcy pedantique wretch, goe chide
> Late schoole boyes, and sowre prentices,
> Goe tell Court-huntsmen, that the King will ride,
> Call countrey ants to harvest offices;
> Love, all alike, no season knowes, nor clyme,
> Nor houres, dayes, moneths, which are the rags of time.

The metaphor in

> Call countrey ants to harvest offices

would seem to answer pretty well to the notion of metaphor as illustrative correspondence or compressed descriptive simile. To the lovers the virtuous industry of the workday world is the apparently pointless bustle of ants and as unrelated to sympathetically imaginable ends. But already in this account something more than descriptive parallel or the vivid presentment of an object by analogy has been recognized. We might easily have said 'the silly bustle of ants': it is plain that the function of the metaphor is to convey an *attitude towards* the object contemplated—the normal workday world, and so to reinforce the tone of sublimely contemptuous good humour that is struck in the opening phrase of the poem,

> Busie old foole . . .

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[1]The part of the chapter upon which the present extract follows gives an analysis of the context of 'Pity, like a naked new-born babe' (*Macbeth*, I, vii).

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The function, in fact, parallels that, in the last line of the stanza, of 'rags', the felicity of which metaphor clearly doesn't lie in descriptive truth or correspondence.

So elementary a point may seem too obvious to be worth making, but, at any rate, it is now made. To put it generally, *tone* and *attitude towards* are likely to be essential heads in analysing the effects of interesting metaphor or imagery. And we may now go on to make another elementary point: unlikeness is as important as likeness in the 'compressed simile' of

> Call countrey ants to harvest offices . . .

It is the fact that farm-labourers are not ants, but very different, that, equally with the likeness, gives the metaphor its force. The arresting oddity or discrepancy, taken by us simultaneously with the metaphorical significance (the perception of which is of course a judgment of the likeness), gives the metaphor its evocative or representational felicity and vivacity—for that it has these we may now admit, on them depending the peculiarly effective expression of the attitude. It is from some such complexity as this, involving the telescoping or focal coincidence in the mind of contrasting or discrepant impressions or effects that metaphor in general—live metaphor—seems to derive its life: life involves friction and tension —a sense of arrest—in some degree.

And this generalization suggests a wider one. Whenever in poetry we come on places of especially striking 'concreteness'—places where the verse has such life and body that we hardly seem to be reading arrangements of words—we may expect analysis to yield notable instances of the co-presence in complex effects of the disparate, the conflicting or the contrasting. A simple illustration of the type of effect is given in

> Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds,

where 'fester', a word properly applied to suppurating flesh and here applied to the white and fragrant emblems of purity brings together in the one disturbingly unified response the obviously disparate associations. For a more complex instance we may consider the well-known (probably, owing to Mr. Eliot, the best-known) passage of Tourneur:

> Does the silkworm expend her yellow labours
> For thee? For thee does she undo herself?
> Are lordships sold to maintain ladyships
> For the poor benefit of a bewildering minute?
> Why does yon fellow falsify highways
> And lays his life between the judge's lips
> To refine such a one? Keeps horse and men
> To beat their valours for her?

The key-word in the first line is 'expend'. In touch with 'spin', it acts with its force of 'spend' on the 'yellow', turning it to gold,

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and so, while adding directly to the suggestion of wealth and luxury, bringing out by a contrasting co-presence in the one word the soft yellowness of the silk. To refer to silk, emblem of luxurious leisure, as 'labours' is in itself a telescoping of conflicting associations. Here then in this slow, packed self-pondering line (owing to the complex organization of meaning the reader finds he cannot skim easily over the words, or slip through them in a euphonious glide[2]) we have the type of the complexity that gives the whole passage that rich effect of life and body. An interesting analysis of the passage in relation to the themes of the plays, for it is closely wrought into the dramatic context, will be found in an essay by L. G. Salingar, *'The Revenger's Tragedy' and the Morality Tradition*.[3] But there is a rich vitality that is immediately apparent in the isolated extract, and we are concerned here with taking note of its obvious manifestations.

In the second line, 'undo' has in it enough of the sense of unwinding a spool to give an unusual feel, and an unusual force, to the metaphorical use. This metaphorical use, to mean 'ruin' (developing 'expend'), makes the silkworm more than a mere silk-worm and leads on to the next line,

> Are lordships sold to maintain ladyships,

where the specious symmetry of 'lordships' and 'ladyships' gives both words an ironic point. There is a contrast in sense between the substance of the one and the nullity of the other; and 'lordships' as we feel the word, gets a weight by transference from the 'yellow labours' and the laborious 'expending' and 'undoing' of the silkworm. And the weight and substance in general evoked by the first three lines, in the labouring movement of their cumulative questions, sets off by contrast the elusive insubstantiality evoked as well as described in that last line, with the light, slurred triviality of its run-out:

> For the poor benefit of a bewildering minute.

The nature of the imagery involved in

> lays his life between the judge's lips

might perhaps not be easy to define, but it is certainly an instance in which effectiveness is not mainly visual. The sense of being at the mercy of another's will and word is focussed in a sensation of extreme physical precariousness, a sensation of lying helpless, on the point of being ejected at a breath into the abyss. In 'refine' we probably have another instance of a double meaning. In the

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[2]*Cf.* the admired couplet:

> Lo! where Maeotis sleeps, and hardly flows
> The freezing Tanais thro' a waste of snows.

[3]See *Scrutiny*, Vol. No.

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first place 'refine' would mean 'make fine' or 'elegant' (the speaker is addressing the skull of his dead mistress). But the gold image, coming through by way of 'sold' (and the more effectively for never having been explicit), seems also to be felt here, with the suggestion that nothing can refine this dross. In this way the structure of the last sentence is explained: horse and men are represented by their 'valours', their 'refined' worths, which are beaten for 'such a one' and so the contrast of the opening question is clinched—'her yellow labours for *thee*?'.

The point has been by now fairly well illustrated that, whatever tip the analyst may propose to himself for a local focussing of attention, the signs of vitality he is looking for are matters of organization among words, and mustn't be thought of in the naïve terms that the word 'image' too readily encourages. Even where it appears that some of the simpler local effects can be picked like plums out of their surroundings, it will usually turn out that more of the virtue depends on an extended context than was obvious at first sight. Consider, for instance, this characteristic piece of Keatsian tactual imagery:

> Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
> Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
> Or on the wealth of globèd peonies . . .

The 'globèd' gives the sensation of the hand voluptuously cupping a peony, and it might be argued that this effect can be explained in terms of the isolated word. But actually it will be found that 'globèd' seems to be with so rich a palpability what it says, to enact in the pronouncing so gloating a self-enclosure, because of the general co-operation of the context. Most obviously, without the preceding 'glut', the meaning of which strongly reinforces the suggestive value of the alliterated beginning of 'globèd', this latter word would lose a very great deal of its luxurious palpability. But the pervasive suggestion of luxury has a great part too in the effect of the word; for what is said explicitly in 'wealth' (and in 'rich' in the next line) is being conveyed by various means everywhere in the poem.

The palpability of 'globèd'—the word doesn't merely describe, or refer to, the sensation, but gives a tactual image. It is as if one were actually cupping the peony with one's hand. So elsewhere, in reading poetry, one responds as if one were making a given kind of movement or a given kind of effort: the imagery the analyst is concerned with isn't (to reiterate the point) merely, or even mainly, visual. *As if*—the difference between image and full actuality is recognized here; a difference, or a distance, that varies from image to image, just as, where poems as wholes are concerned, the analogous difference varies from poem to poem. For images come somewhere between full concrete actuality and merely 'talking about' as poems do—their status, their existence, is of the same order; the image is, in this respect, the type of a poem. In reading a successful poem it is as if, with the kind of qualification intimated,

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one were living that particular action, situation or piece of life; the qualification representing the condition of the peculiar completeness and fineness of art. The 'realization' demanded of the poet, then, is not an easily definable matter; it is one kind of thing in this poem and another in that, and, within a poem, the relation of imagery to the whole involves complex possibilities of variety.

In fact, in more than one sense it is difficult to draw a line round imagery (which is why the tip, 'scrutinize the imagery', is a good one). The point has already been made that even what looks like a sharply localized image may derive its force from a wide context. Here is imagery of effort:

> *Macbeth*: If we should fail,—
> *Lady Macbeth*: We fail!
> But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
> And we'll not fail.

A certain force is immediately obvious in the line as it stands here. The *Arden* editor of *Macbeth* comments (p. 41):

> 'The metaphor is in all probability derived, as Steevens thought, from the screwing up of the chords of stringed instruments'.

Yet, after confirming Steevens, as he thinks, with other passages from Shakespeare, he can conclude his note:

> 'Paton and Liddell think the metaphor was probably suggested by a soldier screwing up the cord of his cross-bow to the "sticking-place".'

To take cognizance of this suggestion and pass it by in favour of the analogy from tuning—that is a characteristic feat of scholarship. An effect of tension can be urged in favour of either of the proposed analogies, but beyond that what peculiar appropriateness can be found in the tuning of an instrument? On the other hand, the dramatic context makes Paton's and Liddell's probability an inevitability. It is the murder of Duncan that is in question; the menace and a sense of dire moral strain vibrate through the scene from its opening, and the screwing up of resolution to the irretrievable deed ('If it were done, when 'tis done' . . .) is felt bodily as a bracing of muscles to the lethal weapon ('screwing' here is no job for the finger-tips). Besides tension there is a contrasting sense of the release that will come, easily but dreadfully (a finger will do it now), when the trigger lets the cord slip from the sticking-place and the bolt flies—irretrievably. When twenty lines farther on, at the end of the scene, Macbeth says

> I am settled, and bend up
> Each corporal agent to this terrible feat

the *Arden* editor this time notes, justly: 'The metaphor of course is from the stringing of a bow'. The cross-bow has been replaced by the long-bow.

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In the following lines of Donne the most notable effect of effort, equally inviting the description 'image', is not got by metaphor:

> On a huge hill,
> Cragged, and steep, truth stands, and hee that will
> Reach her, about must, and about must goe;
> And what the hills suddenness resists, winne so . . .

Here the line-end imposes on the reader as he passes from the 'will' to the 'Reach' an analogical enactment of the reaching.[4]

We might perhaps say 'a metaphorical enactment', though what we have here wouldn't ordinarily be called metaphor. The important point is that it provides the most obvious local illustration of a pervasive action of the verse—or action in the reader as he follows the verse: as he takes the meaning, recreates the organization, responds to the play of the sense-movement against the verse structure, makes the succession of efforts necessary to pronounce the organized words, he performs in various modes a continuous analogical enactment. Such an enactment is apparent in

> about must, and about must goe;

and, if less obvious, sufficiently apparent in

> what the hills suddenness resists, winne so,

where the sense-movement is brought up abruptly as by a rock-face at 'resists', and then, starting on another tack, comes to a successful conclusion.

There is no need to multiply illustrations, though a great variety could easily be mustered. The point has been sufficiently made that in considering these kinds of effect we find 'imagery' giving place to 'movement' as the appropriate term for calling attention to what has to be analysed. That we cannot readily define just were 'imagery' ceases to be an appropriate term need cause no inconvenience, and there seems no more profit in attempting a definition of 'movement' than of 'imagery'. The important thing is to be as aware as possible of the ways in which life in verse may manifest itself—life, or that vital organization that makes collections of words poetry. Terms must be made means to the necessary precision by careful use in relation to the concrete; their use is justified in so far as it is shown to favour sensitive perception; and the precision in analysis aimed at is not to be attained by seeking formal definitions as its tools. It is as pointers for use—*in* use—in the direct discussion of pieces of poetry that our terms and definitions have to be judged; and one thing the analyst has to beware of is the positiveness of expectation (not necessarily, even where fixed

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[4] *Cf.* Keats's *To Autumn*:

> And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
> Steady thy laden head across a brook . . .

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in a definition, a matter of full consciousness) that may make him obtuse to the novelties and subtleties of the concrete.

The term having been introduced it will be best to proceed at once to an instance in which the useful pointer would clearly be 'movement'. Suppose, then, one were asked to compare these two sonnets of Wordsworth's and establish a preference for one of them:

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea:
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouch'd by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport—O! with whom
But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss?—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time, not years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

One might start by saying that, though both offer to be intimately personal, the second seems more truly so, and, in being so, superior; and might venture further that this superiority is apparent in a greater particularity. Faced now with the problem of enforcing these judgments in analysis one would find that imagery hardly offered an opening at all. On the other hand there is a striking difference in movement, a difference registered in the effort of attention required of the reader as he feels his way into a satisfactory reading-out, first of one sonnet, then of the other. An effort, as a matter of fact, cannot properly be said to be required by *Calais Beach;* it contains no surprises, no turns imposing a readjustment in the delivery, but continues as it begins, with a straightforwardness at every point and a continuity of sameness that make it impossible

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to go seriously wrong. *Surprised by joy*, on the contrary, demands a constant and most sensitive vigilance in the reader, and even if he knows the poem well he is unlikely to satisfy himself at the first attempt, such and so many are the shifts of tone, emphasis, modulation, tempo, and so on, that the voice is required to register ('movement' here, it will be seen, is the way the voice is made to move, or feel that it is moving, in a sensitive reading-out).

The first word of the Sonnet, as a matter of fact, is a key-word. The explicit exalted surprise of the opening gives way abruptly to the contrasting surprise of that poignant realization, now flooding back, which it had for a moment banished:

> —Oh! with whom
> But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb . . .

Then follows a surprise for the reader (the others were for the poet too):

> That spot which no vicissitude can find.

It is a surprise in the sense that one doesn't at first know how to read it, the turn in feeling and thought being so unexpected. For the line, instead of insisting on the renewed overwhelming sense of loss, appears to offset it with a consideration on the other side of the account, as it were—there would be a suggestion of 'at any rate' in the inflection. Then one discovers that the 'no vicissitude' is the admonitory hint of a subtler pang and of the self-reproach that becomes explicit in the next line but one. There could be little profit in attempting to describe the resulting complex and delicate inflection that one would finally settle on—it would have to convey a certain tentativeness, and a hint of sub-ironical flatness. Then, in marked contrast, comes the straightforward statement,

> Love, faithful love, recall'd thee to my mind,

followed by the outbreak of self-reproach, which is developed with the rhetorical emphasis of passion:

> But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
> Even for the least division of an hour,
> Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
> To my most grievous loss?

The intensity of this is set off by the relapse upon quiet statement in

> That thought's return
> Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,

—quiet statement that pulls itself up with the renewed intensity (still quiet) of

> Save one, one only,

where the movement is checked as by a sudden scruple, a recall to precision (particularity, intensity and emotional sincerity are critical themes that present themselves to the reader in pretty

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obvious relation here). The poignancy of the quiet constatation settles by way of the 'forlorn'

> Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn

into a steady recognition of a state of loss, the state, the unending privation, being given in the flat evenness of the concluding lines, in the expressive movement of which the rime-scheme plays an important part:

> when I stood forlorn,
> Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
> That neither present time, nor years unborn
> Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

This is the kind of analysis—a kind where the pen is peculiarly at a disadvantage as compared with the voice—by which one would back the judgment that in *Surprised by joy* we have deeply and finely experienced emotion poetically realized, the realization being manifested in a sensitive particularity, a delicate sureness of control in complex effects, and, in sum, a fineness of organization, such as could come only of a profoundly stirred sensibility in a gifted poet.

Of the movement of *Calais Beach* one can give only a negative description; it yields no analysis to pair with that given of the movement of *Surprised by joy,* and seems, in the contrast, to have no life. Nor can anything be found in imagery, or in any aspect, to offset this disparaging account. *Calais Beach,* in fact, in spite of the offer of intimate personal feeling, must be judged to be, in an unfavourable sense, wholly general. By this I mean that it gives the reader nothing better than the soothing bath of vague religiose sentiment that, without Wordsworth's help, he might enjoy any serene summer's evening, watching the sun go down over the sea. We might say that the sonnet gives us 'the sunset emotion'. To say that, of course, isn't necessarily to damn it. But if a poet invokes a stock experience of that order he must control it to some particularizing and refining use; and refinement and particularity are what we look for in vain in *Calais Beach.*

We might clinch the case against it by bringing up as a third term in the comparison the sonnet *Upon Westminster Bridge,* which comes conveniently just before it in the *Oxford Book* (No. 520):

> Earth has not anything to show more far:
> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty:
> This city now doth like a garment wear
> The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
> Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
> Never did sun more beautifully steep
> In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;

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Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

So far as the distinction between 'general' and 'particular and personal' is in question, *Upon Westminster Bridge* looks as if it ought to stand with *Calais Beach*. Need we, in fact, do more than replace 'sunset' by 'sunrise', and say that *Upon Westminster Bridge* gives us 'the sunrise emotion'? That would suggest the difference between that sonnet and the highly 'particular and personal' *Surprised by joy*. And yet surely there is another principle of distinction by which these two sonnets would be bracketed as good poems (though not equally fine) over against *Calais Beach*? What is it that makes this last so positively distasteful to some readers (for I have discovered that others beside myself dislike it strongly)? In any case, *Upon Westminster Bridge*, when compared with it, exacts a decided preference, and the question is perhaps best answered by asking why this is so.

The opening looks unpromisingly like that of *Calais Beach;* the key words, 'fair', 'soul', 'touching' and 'majesty' suggest the same kind of solemn unction, and a glance at the closing lines seems to confirm the suggestion:

Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

And the first point that, as we read through from the beginning, calls for particular comment seems also corroborative—the simile here:

This City now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning

—isn't that a very loose simile? It was inspired, one suspects, by an easy and unscrupulous rime to 'fair', and its apparent first-to-hand quality suggests a very facile concern for 'beauty'. The particularity that follows we put, without enthusiasm, but duly noting a superiority over *Calais Beach,* on the credit side of the account:

silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

It seems a very generalized particularity, one easily attained. And yet we should by now be aware of a decided superiority in this sonnet that makes it a poem of some interest; so that some further inquiry is necessary. The clue presents itself in the unobtrusive adjective 'smokeless'. Though unobtrusive, it is far from otiose;

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obvious as it looks it does more than it says.'[5] It conveys, in fact, both its direct force and the opposite, and gives us locally in its working the structure of the poem. For this poem, unlike *Calais Beach,* has a structure, and what this is now becomes plain.

Looking back, we realize now that 'like a garment' has, after all, a felicity: it keeps the City and the beauty of the morning distinct, while offering to the view only the beauty. Any muffling or draping suggestion the simile might have thrown over the 'ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples' is eliminated immediately by the 'bare' that, preceding them, gets the rime stress (so justifyingly, we now see, the 'wear' that it picks up and cancels). They

lie
Open

—the fact is made present as a realized state in the reader's consciousness by an expressive use of the carry-over (the 'lying open' is enacted) and by a good rime which, picking up the resonance of 'lie' with an effect of leaving us where we were, enhances the suggestion of a state:

Silent, bare,
Ships, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky . . .

The suggestion is further enhanced by the unenergetic leisureliness and lack of tension (as if giving time for two large indicative gestures) of that last line, which, giving metrically and in sense-structure so much room to its two nouns, also reinforces by contrast the evocative strength of the packed preceding line. Then comes the key adjective, 'smokeless'—

All bright and glittering in the smokeless air

—revealing the duality of consciousness out of which this sonnet is organized: the City doesn't characteristically 'lie open', and the 'garment' it usually 'wears', the pall of smoke, is evoked so as to be co-present, if only in a latent way, with the smokelessness.

Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

—Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples are invested, in this sonnet, with the Wordsworthian associations of valley, rock and hill, and the calm is so preternaturally deep because of a kind of negative co-presence (if the expression may be permitted) of the characteristic urban associations. 'Calm' hasn't the obvious am-

[5]Contrast Bridges' *From high Olympus and the domeless courts,* and Hopkins's comment, *Letters,* xlvi.

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bivalence of 'smokeless' but beyond question the stillness of the 'mighty heart' is so touching because of a latent sense of the traffic that will roar across the bridge in an hour or two's time; just as 'sweet' (along with 'glideth') owes its force to the contrasting associations of the metropolitan river.

The structure analysed is not a complex one, and perhaps may be thought too obvious to have been worth the analysis. The point to be made, however, is that *Calais Beach* hasn't even this measure of complexity; it has no structure, but is just a simple one-way flow of standard sentiment. Consider the key words: 'beauteous', 'calm', 'holy', 'quiet', 'Nun', 'adoration', 'tranquillity', 'gentleness', 'broods', 'mighty Being', 'eternal', 'everlastingly', 'solemn', 'divine', 'worshippst', 'Temple', 'shrine', 'God'—there is nothing to counter the insistent repetitious suggestion; nothing to qualify the sweet effusion of solemn sentiment. In fact, the cloying sameness is aggravated by an element not yet noted: instead of the kind of complexity introduced by 'smokeless', we get the sestet, which, with its 'Dear Child! dear Girl!' and 'Abraham's bosom', adds saccharine to syrup and makes the sonnet positively distasteful.

There are, of course, innumerable ways in which 'movement' may come up for consideration. *Surprised by joy* was chosen as an extreme instance, in which 'imagery' hardly gave the analyst an opening at all. Commonly 'movement' and 'imagery' demand attention together. The following is a simple instance:

> The gray sea and the long black land;
> And the yellow half-moon large and low;
> And the startled little waves that leap
> In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
> As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
> And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

The first two lines suggest a preoccupation with pictorial effects, and they invite a languorous reading—or would, if we didn't know what follows. Actually, an approach might be made by asking how it is that, though the stanza is so clearly Victorian, we could have said at once, supposing ourselves to have been reading it for the first time, that it is clearly not Tennysonian or Pre-Raphaelite. The first brief answer might be that it has too much energy. We are then faced with the not difficult task of saying how the effect of energy is conveyed. To begin with

> the startled little waves that leap
> In fiery ringlets from their sleep

clearly don't belong to a dreamy nocturne. The 'startled', itself an energetic word, owes some of its force to the contrast with what goes before (even though the first two lines are not to be read languorously)—a contrast getting sharp definition in the play (a good use of rime) of 'leap' against 'sleep'.

It is an energetic couplet. The energy is active, too, in 'fiery', which is apt description, but doesn't reveal its full value till we

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come to 'quench' in the last line, the most interesting word in the stanza. That fire as well as thirst shall come in with the metaphor is ensured by the 'fiery', and in 'quenching' the speed the poet betrays (he probably couldn't have said why 'quench' came to him) how he has projected his own eagerness—his ardour and desire for the goal—into the boat, pushing on with his will, in a way that must be familiar to everyone, that which is carrying him forward. The nature of the energy that thrusts forward through the tranquil night has defined itself concretely by the time the second half of the poem has been read (it must now be given):

> Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach!
> Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
> A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
> And blue spurt of a lighted match,
> And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
> Than the two hearts beating each to each!

Neither of the stanzas, it will have been noted, has a main verb, a lack intimately related to the mood and movement of the poem. The absence of main verb, it might be said, is the presence of the lover's purpose and goal: his single-minded intentness upon the goal and the confident eagerness with which he moves towards it are conveyed by the overtly incidental, by-the-way, nature of the sensations and perceptions, and the brisk, businesslike succession in which, from the beginning of the poem on, they are noted and left behind. Though incidental, they are vivid, as in a moment of unusual vitality and receptivity, and that this vividness—it is at the same time a vigour of report—should carry with it no attribution of value suggests the all-absorbingness of the purpose and focus of attention. The succession of notes, in fact, conveys a progression. And the effect of energy observed at the outset derives from this particular kind of movement—the particular sense of movement that has just been analysed. The movement, of course, derives its peculiar energy from the local vividness, but even such energetic imagery as

> the quick sharp scratch
> And blue spurt of a lighted match

owes something to the general movement as well as contributing, and it can hardly be said that 'quench' in the first stanza (an effect of the same order—it works along with 'slushy' as well as having the metaphorical value already discussed) contributes more than it owes.

The movement, it might be commented, isn't very subtle, nor is the total effect; and that is true. But the simplicity has its illustrative value, and the poem is an unmistakable instance of a strong realization. Vigour of that peculiar kind, obviously involving limitations, is characteristic of Browning, but is rarely manifested so decidedly as poetic virtue, and so inoffensively to the sensitive.

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To proceed, by way of concluding this chapter, to another comparison:

(a) Wake; the silver dusk returning
Up the beach of darkness brims,
And the ship of sunrise burning
Strands upon the eastern rims.
Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters,
Trampled to the floor it spanned,
And the tent of night in tatters
Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

(b) Out of the wood of thoughts that grows by night
To be cut down by the sharp axe of light,—
Out of the night, two cocks together crow,
Cleaving the darkness with a silver blow.
And bright before my eyes twin trumpeters stand,
Heralds of splendour, one at either hand,
Each facing each as in a coat-of-arms:
The milkers lace their boots up at the farms.

Suppose one were asked to compare these in respect of metaphor and imagery, which they both use with striking boldness—a boldness of poetic stylization that might be thought to constitute a similarity. If we look at the first stanza of (a) we might be inclined to say that the decorated effect there was the main purpose. Certainly there is a sense in which the metaphorical imagery is offered for its own sake and (apart from being beautiful and striking) not for anything it does; it demands immediate approval, in its own right, as something self-sufficient and satisfying—we mustn't, for instance, ask what becomes of the burning ship as the silver flood mounts (or does it?) and full daylight comes. The function of the imagery here, in short, is to hold the attention from dwelling in a realizing way on the alleged sanction—the actuality ostensibly invoked. It demands attention for what it immediately is, but only a very limited kind of attention: the reader takes in at a glance the value offered; it is recognized currency; the beauty is conventional and familiar.

And 'decorative', after all, is not altogether the right word. It might do for the opening of Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat* (which was possibly at the back of Housman's mind as he wrote the stanza); but there is an emotional drive here that would prompt the accepting reader with 'lyrical'. That drive expresses itself in the urgent movement, which is intimately related to the qualities noted in the imagery. In fact, an admirer of Housman might say that the imagery, like the movement, expresses a passionate indocility to experience, along with a wilful hunger after beauty. A return comment would be that (unless some justifying significance emerges later in the poem) the kind of beauty offered values itself implicitly at a rate that a mature mind can't endorse.

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When we come to the second stanza the comment must be that the 'indocility' has become a violence—a violence to common experience, and the relation of the imagery to observable fact a gross and insensitive falsity. The tempo and the whole nature of the passing of night into day are outrageously misrepresented by 'shatters' and the picture of the land strewn with rags of dark. The 'shatters' is reconciled with the 'tatters' (the 'vault' to the 'tent'), it will be noted, only by the bluff of the rime, a kind of bullying or dazing effect; and the stamp of the movement, hobnailed with alliteration, emphasizes the insensitiveness. The movement, in fact, provides the most convenient index of the quality of the poem. To have cut off the two first stanzas from the rest does Housman no injustice, as the reader may confirm by turning up VIII (*Reveille*) in *A Shropshire Lad*. And in confirming he will be verifying also that a challenge to a reading-out would be a good introduction to the analysis: even an ardent admirer would, after the second stanza, find it difficult to declaim the poem convincingly, so embarrassing is the patent inadequacy of the substance to the assertive importance of movement and tone, the would-be intense emotional rhetoric.

It is a difference in movement that strikes us first as we pass from (a) to (b). Associated with this difference there is, we become aware, a difference in the imagery: whereas Housman's depends on our being taken up in a kind of lyrical intoxication that shall speed us on in exalted thoughtlessness, satisfied, as we pass, with the surface gleam of ostensible value, Edward Thomas's invites pondering (we register that in the movement) and grows in significance as we ponder it:

> Out of the wood of thoughts that grows by night
> To be cut down by the sharp axe of light,—
> Out of the night two cocks together crow,
> Cleaving the darkness with a silver blow.

—Of the use of metaphor here too it might be said that it seems to be decorative in intention, rather than dictated by any pressure of a perceived or realized actuality. To present a 'wood of thoughts' as being 'cut down' by an 'axe of light' looks like a bold indulgence in the pleasures of stylization. Yet we have to recognize that 'wood', with its suggestions of tangled and obscure penetralia, stirring with clandestine life, is not an infelicitous metaphor for the mental life of sleep. And when in re-reading we come to 'silver blow' we have to recognize a metaphorical subtlety—that is, a subtlety of organization—that distinguishes (b) from (a) (it is subtlety of organization, of course, that produces the effect, in Thomas, of a pondering movement). 'Cleaving' identifies the effect of the sound with that of the axe, the gleam of which gives an edge to the 'silver' of the blown trumpet. The 'silver-sounding' trumpet is a familiar convention, and the element of wilful fantasy in this translation of the cock-crow becomes overt in the heraldically stylized twin trumpeters:

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> And bright before my eye twin trumpeters stand,
> Heralds of splendour, one at either hand,
> Each facing each as in a coat-of-arms.

We are prepared so for the ironical shift of the last line, where daylight reality asserts itself:

> The milkers lace their boots up at the farms.

The poet, aware as he wakes of the sound and the light together, has humoured himself in a half-waking dream-fantasy, which, when it has indulged itself to an unsustainable extreme of definiteness, suddenly has to yield to the recognition of reality.

Returning to the comparison between (b) and (a), we can now make another point, one that has been covered under the term 'movement'. Housman's proffer of his imagery is simple and simple-minded: 'Here is poetical gold; take it! Here is radiant beauty; be moved'. What we are aware of from the first line in Edward Thomas's little poem is, along with the imagery, an attitude towards it; an attitude subtly conveyed and subtly developed.

F. R. LEAVIS.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

COBBETT AS CLASSIC

THE OPINIONS OF WILLIAM COBBETT, edited by G. D. H. and Margaret Cole (The Cobbett Publishing Co., Ltd., 10/6).

For their work on Cobbett Mr. and Mrs. G. D. H. Cole deserve well of the common reader. Mr. Cole's *Life of William Cobbett* was at once a model of scholarly biography and an excellent introduction to the social, economic and political condition of England in the early nineteenth century. The handsome annotated edition of the *Rural Rides* in three volumes—by the two editors—is the only complete edition; and although it is, I suspect, too expensive for most of us to possess it is a book to know of for reference. Now, the Coles have brought out *The Opinions of William Cobbett*—some three-hundred pages of selections long and short from the *Political Register*, designed to give a picture of the opinions of Cobbett the Radical on the enclosures, the National Debt, the factories, machine-smashing, rick-burning, parliamentary Reform, the new Poor Law and a variety of other topics. It is a book one is very glad to have; and one can only admire the editorial skill that has made so excellent a selection from what must have been an overwhelming mass of material.

Yet Cobbett the Radical, 'the enemy of cant and humbug and repression, the pugnacious defender of English liberties', is not quite the whole of the Cobbett who is, or should be, an English classic. Mr. Cole provides a clue when he insists that the great Radical was intensely conservative. He wanted, he said, 'nothing new': 'I wish to see the poor men of England what the poor men of England were when I was born'. He was the spokesman of a huge unvocal class whose habits of mind were formed long before the advent of Pitt and paper, and it is his representative importance that I wish to speak of, very briefly, here.

No man had a sounder sense than Cobbett of the importance of economic necessities,[1] but when he denounces the enclosures it is plain that what rouses his indignation is the spectacle not merely of economic injustice but of the break-up of a way of life and the destruction of the human qualities fostered by the older pattern. It was, to start with, a way of life in which the function of 'work' was not merely to supply the wherewithall for 'living'.

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[1]Mr. Cole quotes from *The Poor Man's Friend*: 'Poverty is, after all, the great badge, the never-failing badge of slavery. Bare bones and rags are the true marks of the real slave. What is the object of government? To cause men to live *happily*. They cannot be happy without a sufficiency of *food* and *raiment*'.

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> 'If the cultivators of the land be not, generally speaking, the most virtuous and most happy of mankind, there must be something at work in the community to counteract the operations of nature. This way of life gives the best security for health and strength of body. It does not teach, it necessarily produces early rising; constant forethought; constant attention; and constant care of dumb animals. The nature and qualities of all living things are known to country boys better than to philosophers. The seasons, the weather, the causes and effects of propagation, in cultivation, in tillage, are all known from habit, from incessant repetition of observation. The nature, the properties, the various uses, of different soils and woods are familiar to the mind of country boys. Riding, climbing, swimming, nothing comes amiss, and they are come, and are not sought. Rural affairs leave not a day, not an hour, unoccupied and without its cares, its promises, and its fruitions'.[2]

The pre-industrial past to which Cobbett so often appealed may have been, as Mr. Cole says, 'partly mythical', but no one who knows Cobbett's own first-hand experience can deny his right to opinions such as that just quoted: at least it can't be dismissed as the sentimental nostalgia of an urban intellectual .

The way of life that Cobbett valued, that he in a sense embodied, was one that fostered the faculties and interests of the whole man. We can see this in the particular kind of 'feeling for nature' that informs his writing. For him there is no rigid distinction between beauty and use. 'I have, *for my part*', he says 'no idea of *picturesque beauty* separate from *fertility of soil*. If you can have *both* . . . then it is delightful; but, if I must have *one* or the *other*, anybody can have the *picturesque beauty* for me'. Yet his attitude is not simply utilitarian. He has a deep sense of the bounty of nature, and a keen eye for natural beauty. (In the *Rural Rides* he seems to take it for granted that his audience will like descriptions as well as information about soils, crops, etc.). But—and it is this that distinguishes Cobbett's taste so completely from the nineteenth-century liking for scenery—his feeling for the countryside, his appreciation of the natural scene, is based on detailed knowledge and is inseparable from his agricultural interests. The following is a characteristic passage from the *Rural Rides*:

> 'The custom is in this part of Hertfordshire (and I am told it continues into Bedfordshire) to leave a *border* round the ploughed part of the fields to bear grass and make hay from, so that, the grass being now made into hay, every corn field has a closely mowed grass walk about ten feet wide all round it, between the corn and the hedge. This is most beautiful! The hedges are now full of the shepherd's rose, honeysuckles, and

[2] I take this, and most of the succeeding quotations, from *The Progress of a Ploughboy to a Seat in Parliament*, the autobiography made up from Cobbett's own writings by William Reitzel (Faber).

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all sorts of wild flowers; so that you are upon a grass walk, with this most beautiful of all flower gardens and shrubberies on your one hand, and with the corn on the other. And thus you go from field to field (on foot or on horseback), the sort of corn, the sort of underwood and timber, the shape and size of the fields, the height of the hedge-rows, the height of the trees, all continually varying. Talk of *pleasure-grounds* indeed! What that man ever invented, under the name of pleasure-grounds, can equal these fields in Hertfordshire? This is a profitable system too; for the ground under hedges bears little corn, and it bears very good grass. Something, however, depends on the nature of the soil: for it is not all land that will bear grass, fit for hay, perpetually; and, when the land will not do that, these headlands would only be a harbour for weeds and couch-grass, the seeds of which would fill the fields with their mischievous race'.

H. J. Massingham, in his autobiography, quotes a remark made about W. H. Hudson, 'With him, seeing, knowing and feeling were one'. The words can be applied to Cobbett. As the extract shows, he doesn't keep his knowledge, his observation and his 'appreciative faculties' in separate compartments; they are related aspects of his living interests.

We reach similar conclusions when we consider Cobbett's style, which, it is worth noting, is a good deal more varied than is commonly supposed. The *Opinions* has a fine example of his popular expository manner in the long *Letter to the Luddites* ('This is a very important matter, and it is easily understood by any man of plain good sense, who will but attend to it for a moment'—but the demand that Cobbett proceeds to make on the attention of the journeymen whom he is addressing is considerable). For contrast there is the plain, effective sarcasm of the Letter to the Cotton-Lords and the restrained invective of the ironic 'Honours to Mr. Pitt', which reminds us that Cobbett was a great admirer of Swift. At its worst his style is clumsy and over-emphatic (the style that is parodied in *Rejected Addresses*); but at its best it is vigorous and direct: ' *"Corporal infliction"*,' he says, '—That is to say, *flogging*. Why do you mince the matter? Why not name the thing?'. It has a kind of physical downrightness that makes what he writes of immediately present to the reader. His style, in short, is informed by that vivid feeling for life, for the truly alive, that is his essential characteristic.

'That melancholy, mean fellow, Doctor Johnson, observes, that when a man plants a tree, he begins to think of dying. If this were the fact, is that to prevent the planting of trees? I have been planting of trees in every spot that I have ever occupied, all my life time; and [in America] I collected seeds of trees to carry home, and to sow in England. I expected to sit under the shade of the trees which [those] seeds would produce; and, if I only saw them six inches high, had I not the enjoyment of so much of them?'

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It is the vitality of the English countryman that is expressed here, and it is the same vitality—life delighting in life—that informs Cobbett's prose, as it informed so much of our older literature.

It was, of course, very largely the contrast between the bounty of nature and the poverty created by man that made Cobbett a Radical. And because he never allowed his direct perception of human reality to be blurred by abstractions, he was a great Radical. But he was also something more. He was a great *representative* writer. It is because he expresses so powerfully an essential part of the English tradition that one would welcome a far more widespread recognition of his worth. The bulk of his work is far too great for most of us to tackle as a whole, but to-day the common reader is not unprovided for. To *The Progress of a Ploughboy to a Seat in Parliament* and the *Rural Rides* (two volumes in 'Everyman', with an Introduction by Edward Thomas) can now be added Mr. and Mrs. Cole's excellent book of extracts, which one hopes to see in a second edition on paper that is less trying to the eye.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

AUDEN'S INVERTED DEVELOPMENT

FOR THE TIME BEING, by W. H. Auden (Faber and Faber, 8/6).

It is becoming apparent that any claim to poetic importance which Auden may have in the future will rest upon effects produced almost casually in his early work. His experiments have been immensely more promising than his achievement, and the fact that his poetry has not profited by them rather indicates that his efforts have not been directed towards improving his poetry, but towards something at the best extraneous to it, and at the worst extremely damaging. It has become increasingly obvious with each new publication that this poet's greatest difficulty lies in determining quite what he wishes to express and in formulating an appropriate attitude towards it, and that, at any time, his equipment for dealing with his matter, in a technical sense, is vastly in excess of what is required. The correct answer to this problem, for Auden, would have been to admit to himself that he could range safely only in a limited field, and to confine himself to saying the comparatively little that he could say personally, and to reduce and refine his effects to the minimum necessary for complete individual expression. Instead of this, he has attempted to assimilate more and more general ideas, to write verse based upon human experience quite outside his individual scope, and hence to write at second-hand. His technical facility has been lavished upon the expression of sentimental regrets, boyish fantasies and unbalanced, immature enthusiasms. Few poets can have started writing with such superficial promise of accomplishment, have developed so completely

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their early weaknesses, and shelved so definitely their early strength. One is thus forced to the conclusion that Auden has occasionally written a few lines worth preserving as a bye-product of his conscious application to his task—a view which is supported by a glance through his work. For only such a series of casual successes will explain the absence of any single, successful poem, and yet the appearance throughout of occasional successful passages. Further, it will be noted that those qualities which make for success remain undeveloped throughout—that the better parts of his later work are not an advance on the better parts of his earlier work, whereas his faults develop in a predictable way and connect quite simply with weaknesses already revealed. He has thus undergone an inverted process of development, natural enough in a poet impervious to criticism from outside the group which formed his ideal public, and which existed on a basis of mutual admiration which a more independent poet would have found an embarrassment.

Reading *Paid on Both Sides*, one becomes aware of moral issues suggested but not fully defined or worked out in the poetry—there is a residue which one feels one has not quite grasped, a meaning beyond the literal meaning of the words on the page, suggested, but persistently elusive. Images come to have enormous symbolical significance, an action appears to be in progress between protagonists of immense importance.

> O how shall man live
> Whose thought is born, child of one farcical night,
> To find him old? The body warm but not
> By choice, he dreams of folk in dancing bunches,
> Of tart wine spilt on home-made benches,
> Where learns, one drawn apart, a secret will
> Restore the dead; but comes thence to a wall.
> Outside on frozen soil lie armies killed
> Who seem familiar, but they are cold.

Here there appear to be possibilities; a situation is partly realized in an urgent and supple idiom, and there appears to be a reserve of meaning which might eventually make itself apparent. But as one reads on one discovers that the qualified success of this and later poems depends upon ambiguity—that when a point is reached at which a definite formulation of an attitude or an issue is made, one is confronted with a shallow commonplace, something vaguely defined in terms of 'love', 'beauty' or 'good'. Just as throughout his work the indefinite evil forces, to which he seems extremely sensitive, resolve themselves into nothing more than a succession of images of disease, sterility or cruelty, so his positive values are the merest indications of conventional virtues. In fact, there is no imaginative life whatsoever in Auden's treatment of moral conflict, and it is a verbal fluency, incorporating a number of effectively juxtaposed images, appearing to make a general impression by putting together a number of smaller impressions united at the most

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by compatible moods, which gives a specious vitality to much of his earlier work. He is consequently at his weakest when he is most explicit, when the suggestiveness of his language has to give way to a bald statement. Then the alarming paucity of idea beneath the surface of his impressionistic facility reveals itself, and in his yearning for

> New styles of architecture, a change of heart

one realizes that Auden is attempting to diagnose the spiritual malady of an age with the experiential equipment of the man in the street. Again, it becomes more and more obvious throughout Auden's work that his morbidity and disillusion, which have always the insecurity of pose, are in fact nothing more than a fashionable accretion, perhaps unconscious and unavoidable, and that fundamentally he is committed to an easy materialistic optimism, that somewhere and somehow agents for good are at work, though what the 'good' is and how these indefinite virtuous ends are to be achieved is more than he can tell us. We know that 'It is time for the destruction of error', but after the inevitable, and sometimes effective, sequence of related images which follow that announcement in the poem from which it is extracted, all we discover is that the 'death of the old gang' is a necessary preliminary, and that after

> The old gang to be forgotten in the spring,
> The hard bitch and the riding master,
> Stiff underground . . .

we may see

> deep in a clear lake
> The lolling bridegroom, beautiful, there.

What success this has depends upon its lack of explicitness, and it is therefore not surprising that *For the Time Being*, which is in places the most explicit work he has produced yet, if in places the most ambiguous, should also be much the least satisfactory.

For the Time Being consists of two compositions of indeterminate genre, with a persistent suggestion of having been adapted for broadcasting. The first, called 'The Sea and the Mirror', is an attempted extension of *The Tempest* into regions more uncertainly defined, both geographically and philosophically, than Prospero's island. The second is the title-piece of the whole and is described as 'A Christmas Oratorio'. Both are dramatized and have prose inserts of considerable length, in which the essentials of the situation being treated are discussed very tediously with the audience. Here, much of the poet's intention, already apparent from the verse, is unnecessarily emphasized, and much that remained obscure in the verse is presented with no added clarity in laboured and ungainly prose. In both works he indulges his increasing taste for general philosophical propositions, concerns himself with much deeper issues than he is at all competent to do justice to, and becomes involved in a complex of ideas which he has neither the intellectual sweep

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nor the emotional integrity to assimilate as a poet. The first poem is much the less explicit of the two, and is accordingly the more successful; but here the allegorical figures have such a wide possible field of reference, and the indication of any definite level at which the poem is to be understood as a whole is so vague, that the whole point of allegory is lost, the meaning too dependent on individual construction. (A reviewer in one of the literary weeklies, for example, connected Prospero with Democracy). Instead of working out his general ideas in particular and concrete terms throughout the poem, so that the interplay of concepts and qualities becomes something accessible to the mind and feelings at once, the poet provides his familiar association of images and metaphors, but with no suggestion of any coherent imaginative scheme for the whole. In consequence, there is a superficial suggestion throughout that some impressive action is being worked out, but on closer examination the significance of it evaporates, and one is left with the theme of the resolution of the duality of Ariel and Caliban, with other characters from *The Tempest* who may mean this, that or the other according to the general construction which the reader puts on the main theme. There are occasional passages of pleasant imagery which excite no complaint, unless it be that even here Auden's rhythms are becoming flaccid and his language more reflective than active. Above all, there is a persistent inflated manner which one can trace back without difficulty to earlier work in which the poet permitted himself to preach too unguardedly. Compare, for example:

> Greed showing shamelessly her naked money,
> And all Love's wandering eloquence debased
> To a collector's slang, Smartness in furs,
> And Beauty scratching miserably for food . . .

with his more recent

> O blessed be bleak exposure on whose sword
> Caught unawares, we prick ourselves alive!
> Shake Failure's bruising fist . . .

There can be few clearer signs of lack of poetic vitality than these automatically produced catalogues of abstract qualities, all doing something conventionally appropriate or with conventionally suitable attributes, but no more vivid or disturbing than if they had remained in the dictionary. At the best, they are dull; at the worst, they are absurd, as when the Star of the Nativity in the second poem invites one to

> Hear tortured Horror roaring for a Bride . . .

The habit of using capital letters for emphasis, where true emphasis would be achieved by a well-managed sentence construction and rhythm, is one which has grown on Auden. It results not infrequently in an appearance of extraordinary pretentiousness, emphasized by the complete flatness of the straightforward, unambiguous statement, as in the following:

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Sin fractures the Vision, not the Fact; for
The Exceptional is always usual
And the Usual exceptional.
To choose what is difficult all one's days
As if it were easy, that is faith . . .

'A Christmas Oratorio', from which the last quotation comes, is an example of how bad Auden can be when it comes to treatment of clearly defined moral issues—in this case the theme of the Nativity, with comments by a Narrator who is, presumably, the detached observer of the action, pointing the moral but by no means adorning the tale. There is no place here to quote examples of his lapses of taste, his lack of proportion which makes him self-important when he wishes to be serious, frivolous or even nasty when he wants to be witty. His values, uncertain and unsystematized, represent nothing appreciably solid or coherent. This subject, if it is to be treated tolerably, demands either genuine simplicity or genuine sophistication in the artist. The poet who writes at one end of the scale

Come to our well-run desert
Where anguish arrives by cable
And the deadly sins may be bought in tins
With instructions on the label . . .

and at the other

He is the Way.
Follow him through the Land of Unlikeness;
You will see rare beasts, and have unique adventures

has neither qualification. For it is in just that irresponsible spirit, of undefined but 'unique' adventure, that he approaches his material —The Nativity, *The Tempest,* the Oedipus legend in 'The Ascent of F6'.

That Auden started his career with apparently unusual gifts cannot be denied; and even this volume displays, in places, snatches of his old accomplishment. But it has no chance when set against his determination to write on a grand scale with the mental equipment only of a minor poet. If his seriousness of purpose were part of his nature instead of yet another, if unconscious, attitude, his tendency to the cheap, commonplace and exhibitionistic might not persist. But it is clear from this volume that his separation from the circle in which that tendency was formed came too late to enable him to discard his public character and see what values of his own he could substitute for those of the group which made his reputation.

R. G. LIENHARDT.

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CONTEMPORARY VERSE

FAREWELL AND WELCOME, by Ronald Bottrall (Editions Poetry London, 6/-).

A WORLD WITHIN A WAR, by Herbert Read (Faber, 6/-).

FIVE RIVERS, by Norman Nicholson (Faber, 6/-).

COLLECTED POEMS OF SIDNEY KEYES (Routledge, 7/6).

HAMPDENS GOING OVER, by Herbert Corby (Editions Poetry London, 4/6).

NEW LYRICAL BALLADS: Ballad Book 1 (Editions Poetry London, 4/6).

INSTEAD OF A SONNET, by Paul Potts: Ballad Book 2 (Editions Poetry London, 4/6).

PERSONAL LANDSCAPE: An Anthology of Exile (Editions Poetry London, 6/-).

The title-poem and *Evidence Evalued* from Mr. Bottrall's new volume have already appeared in *Scrutiny*, justifying reference, rather than lengthy quotation here. In *Farewell and Welcome*, section III, the Poundian *Nearness has Terrors* is, I think, the most successful (especially the first four stanzas), accomplishing what could not have been done otherwise with that degree of precision, and its skill and strength reside notably in the management (critical handling) of sophisticated commonplace and cliché, and a controlling concern with emotional adequacy and inadequacy. On the other hand, the comparison challenged by the title of the next section, *Definition of Love*, cannot be sustained by its merely cumulative effect and encyclopaedic intention.

> This may be the wild talk of a lover
> But this is what we are discussing now, love

is a defensive lapse and tactlessness (one is tempted to say garrulousness) to which the author is liable. And in the final section I think there is observable a relaxation and submergence of his precise formulations in large-termed identifications, particularly in the concluding lines, which may spring from that excess of will ('rapt') over achievement in 'positive validation', common to *Salute to Them that Know* in his first volume, and other poems in this:

> Come to! Achieve this join;
> Knit up the shrinking rainbow . . .

The success of the whole sequence, that is, is unequal, and it cannot be fairly considered as having a more extensive organization than 'sequence' suggests. Mr. Botrall's proper tendency is towards a simple and effective organization, almost aphoristic, exemplified in the successful sections of *Farewell and Welcome*—the alert use

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of the phrase ('a satisfactory modus vivendi', 'the most delicate centres of integration') in section III, the section-titles (*Fulfilment is not in Waiting*), and the general sententiousness of simple reflection—and throughout the volume, concisely (*Assignments, Medallions, The Two Faces,* etc.) and in ostensibly more ambitious poems.

The strength and limitations of the *Prologue* are representative; the themes are drawn to an admirable summing-up:

> Our era's progress
> We urge with profit to that Sahara, comfort;

but there is something rather familiar, slightly second-hand (not discreditably) about it; it depends very much on a context of certain critical prose and assumptions, so that one could not invoke 'the point at which the growth of the mind shows itself', or even 'modification of sensibility' as appropriate. Lawrence's reactions to the same facts offer a contrast which may underline this judgment. Similarly one may remark of the numerous simple and sensitive poems about Love, that they are too much *about,* and that there is too much Love—the discursiveness is apt to be too inclusive and the crucial concepts unprobed. And besides tending to accumulation and enumeration, the aphoristic neatness often disguises a disproportionate volume of poetic *assertion*. The resultant assured note and movement has affinities with, and is sometimes (*Lineaments of Repose*) actually derivative from, Donne.

In *Evidence Evalued* a corresponding and more significant relationship to Eliot is inescapable. The movement of passages like

> To recreate the waxed petals
> Of a begonia . . .
> Are not dissimilar tasks,

are so dependent ('To communicate with Mars . . .') that one doubts if Mr. Bottrall is aware how little he has contributed. Mr. Eliot's manner thus adopted becomes mannerism ('not dissimilar' reminds one of Arnold's comments on Milton's 'self-retarding movement'), and his tone and language predicated of something so different or so much simpler—

> to the partner in the moment
> It may mean communion or union,

(here a slackness or acquiescence in the deterioration of language), that one observes the familiar process of dissolution and dissipation in minor poetry of the integrity of major achievement. At other points one notes a real disjunction between the 'indebted':

> Existence at this level of communication,

and the lapse in the tangible and 'unsupported':

> As we cannot know that we
> Are on an island until we glimpse the sea;

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or a confidence that seems facile—

> But when this promontory is reached
> This other continent established, speech
> Precision of thought and vision
> Flow as the spring solstice flowers,

when one compares Mr. Eliot's inhibitions in this matter of poetic speech. Mr. Bottrall's images often exhibit this contentedness with simplifications that leave the reader dissatisfied ('elimination without concentration'), despite their accomplishment (and Wit):

> 'In this freedom what is true and dreams
> Are one, as clocks
> At twelve blend day and night
> And tomorrow and yesterday, darkness and light
> In a seamless whole unite'.
> So saying I assume a more than temporal order . . .

The conclusion of the poem, which then follows, relies, for intelligibility even, on its audience's acquaintance with *Four Quartets*; while its idiom and 'doctrine' can only be regarded as an indeterminate substitute for Mr. Eliot's, surely unacceptable to any such audience. But Mr. Bottrall seems quite unaware of his inadequacies, especially when his verse has quasi-metaphysical pretensions, instead of a concern with immediately personal and social 'poise'.

A Nocturnal is one of the more unfortunate attempts in this volume, with common affectations like

> The lights in Europe have quenched one by one,

and

> Blushing and bashful as a virgin lover
> Diffident at a door,

and more serious manifestations of a general complaisance becoming excessive and vicious, as in the assertive inflation of

> Then over bowed shoulders
> Livid with the curse of human intercourse,
> Shall break with salving might
> The miracle of intelligible Light.

There are a number of other cases of radical uncertainty of tone, suggesting that the author's sophistication works only within narrow limits. *Eggs in a Basket* is almost embarrassingly casual; *Synthetic Gin* and *A Valediction*, though in the Pound manner, display touches of glibness and animus—one has read substantially the same on cheaper paper; while the latter poem in its three final stanzas abandons any ironic intention for a single-minded protestation that engages Mr. Bottrall but not the reader whose faith is less simple.

'Mr. Bottrall makes no concessions to the lazy reader, but his work amply repays all the attention that must be given it'. For once a blurb is, I think, no more than just; my attention has been

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mainly unfavourable because he has generally got notices that continue to obscure the true nature and integral limitations of his poetry. It offers quite straightforward reading—if its demand for alertness were not so unwelcome to most readers and reviewers. The verse is not essentially difficult (the essential difficulty of *East Coker* and *The Dry Salvages* is, in every sense, a moral one) nor the sensibility complicated—it is very much that of many moderately responsive and reflective individuals with all their inadequacies—only, at its best, precisely and soberly formulated.

To say that is not to equate Mr. Bottrall as a simple soul with Mr. Herbert Read, though the former's poem on the *Horizon*-sponsored Alfred Wallis ('autochthonic vigour') is undoubtedly a symptom akin to Mr. Read's enthusiasm for Child Art. There seems no compelling reason why Mr. Read's musings and protests should not have taken prose form, with more substance and effect—did one not know his actual prose, where the admirable honesty which is the single mark of his verse-sensibility is smothered in hastily-acquired vocabularies and paraphernalia. As it is, one can respect his directness—

> One of the dazed and disinherited
> I crawled out of that mess
> with two medals and a gift of blood-money.
> No visible wounds to lick—only a resolve
> to tell the truth without rhetoric
> the truth about war and about men
> involved in the indignities of war,

and yet feel that, outside one or two such passages, there is an almost total absence of positive conviction in movement, sometimes a despairing literalness when the author is genuinely at a loss:

> But we who have put our faith
> in the goodness of man
> and now see man's image debased
> lower than the wolf or hog—
> Where can we turn for consolation?

Occasionally he tries to enliven his somewhat slender and feeble output by fresh realization, but either it isn't very happy:

> The day passes
> the sun swerves
> silently like a cyclist round a bend;

or the neatness is just verbal:

> Beauty has no other reason
> than the eye can indicate;
> Only the miraculous conception
> is immaculate;

or the wit doesn't come off:

> Life folds like a fan with a click!

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Otherwise writing poetry is for Mr. Read (unconsciously, one is sure) a matter of familiar formulae:

> A soldier passed me in the freshly fallen snow
> His footsteps muffled, his face unearthly grey;
> And my heart gave a sudden leap
> As I gazed on a ghost of five-and-twenty years ago . . .
> Then I turned with a smile, and he answered my salute
> As he stood against the fretted hedge, which was like white lace.

Perhaps Mr. Read is responsible for more than the publication of Sidney Keyes' *Collected Poems*; one feels one knows the source of this kind of literary eclecticism: 'He loved the masters of the macabre: Donne, Webster, Goya, Beddoes, Dickens, Picasso, Klee, Rouault, Graham Greene, and such as came his way of the early German and Russian films', 'he found his emotional problems most completely resolved in the writings of the nineteenth-century school of haunted husbandmen—Wordsworth, Clare, Van Gogh, and later, Edward Thomas' (Introductory Memoir); 'The only living writers whom I can accept entirely are Eliot, Charles Williams, Graves (to some extent), my great friend John Heath Stubbs, and a few others'. Such literariness is the chief attribute of Keyes' writing—there are poems in various people's (mainly nineteenth-century) manners, with a marked tendency to volubility: the Wordsworthian ('Why should we . . .?'), the Browningesque monologue (*Gilles de Retz*), and something of the Arnoldian:

> how should they know
> Such folly as we suffer, such perplexity
> Of soul, such deadly love, such wonder?

But Keyes cannot maintain this or any style constantly, without addition ('Then let them sleep, the poor things, this cold night'). Fragmentarily recognizable:

> Condemned and crowned, lay his bones proudly
> Among the great betrayed,

his language is generally, I'm afraid, of the only-too-common class: 'So come sweet death and be my joy', 'The moon's a swollen corpse', 'The room is ready but the guest is dead', 'He knew betrayal . . . defied the cruel season's power', 'Else had my word prevailed', 'Though my heart is dumb', 'His eyes grew cold as lead', 'time's deceit', 'scored by time's derision'; or more modern (disregarding pervasive Eliot): 'The earth beats like a dynamo pumping sap', 'the warm night curves round me like a hand', 'When truth came prying like a surgeon's knife', 'young men walking the open streets of death's republic'. Keyes' wordiness seems not only indicative of emotional flabbiness ('luminous with fear', 'seeking and yearning for eternity', 'death's unquenchable wisdom', 'in a rage of love and grief and pity', 'Others who failed though young and good and

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lovely', and much 'unlovely', 'bitter', 'bravely', 'pitifully'), but also of incurable carelessness, for one gets phrases like 'When you foresaw with vision prescient', and an all-consolatory use of 'Love's great word'.

In the much-praised *The Buzzard*, which I cannot see to be more than a string of unrelated images and verbalisms ('fate', 'golden', 'invisible radius of time', 'tufts of cloud', or this:

> Thoughts nuzzle to the crystalline
> Walls of the curving brain and gape their message
> Dumbly and flounce away),

there is typical confusion in the purport of the poem (quite apart from the fact that the intention of the notes is rarely perceptible in the verse—'pain', for instance), for the contrast of full human comprehension with the buzzard's narrow cruel apprehension is replaced by a familiar moral (or muddle):

> Unfocus rather the too-watchful eye
> And wander singing in the golden haze . . .

Everywhere one finds (as with Mr. Read the publicist) the intellectual garb scarcely disguising a real disease of attitude to 'the running demon, thought'. Of course, most of Sidney Keyes' attitudes are in any case borrowed, merely literary, but, like critical dogma ('one can only become entirely sensitive by emptying the mind: then it can be filled by all kinds of uncreated archetypal images'), unconnected with emotional and verbal discipline they can be dangerous socially as well as poetically:

> their glory greater
> Patiently giving time and strength and vision
> Even identity
> Into the future's keeping

That last line is all the more an incitement to action by meaning anything or nothing—the volume under review contains supporting documentation—as well as helping to fill out a collection of verse of about the same bulk as Mr. Eliot's total production. Our surviving poetry-producers, indeed, would do well to consider this quantitative question.

Mr. Nicholson provides a bulk of unchallengeable 'descriptive detail', as ballast, I suspect, for caution is hardly a characteristic of his heartier guide-book rambling vein ('bracken up to your waist and ham and egg teas') or of his muscular Christianity,

> The Jolly Roger of the Blest—
> Skull of Adam, Cross of Christ,

outdoing Chester-Belloc. Even in his descriptive imagery he can be (one feels inconsequent metaphor to be appropriate) effervescent:

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November sunlight floats and falls
Like soapsuds on the castle walls.

* * * *

The broken sandstone slabs litter the shore
Like gingerbread.

He stands no nonsense from the orthodox (*The Burning Bush*), nor anyone else:

bursting bud and bomb deny
The Manichaean heresy;

and this violent manner can be startling (like the Antipodes in shoes, but apparently more serious in intention):

My soul shall detonate on high
And plant itself in cracks of sky.

It effects transformations, too, of Wordsworth (Mr. Nicholson rather uncharacteristically choosing

Not the radical, the poet and the heretic,
To whom the water-forces shouted and the fells
Were like a blackboard for the scrawls of God,
But the old man, inarticulate and humble).

Mr. Nicholson has a persistent interest in apocalyptic events and fantasies, releasing him from the control of any logic or responsibility and allowing his 'descriptive talents' to spawn their own cosmology and mythology, with ingenuity of this sort:

Creatures with necks as long as larches
With legs like oaks and tails like birches;
Creatures from shoulder-blade to knee
Upholstered like a plush settee,
Or jointed along spine and hip
And plated like a battleship.

To be more serious than that merits, one might say that such creations cannot be convincingly visual as they are not part of any convincing vision. Indeed, he should not let his publishers talk of 'powers of reflection and organization' (he might consider Blake's *Mental Traveller*); and he should try to make his verse sound less like Cyril Fletcher.

Mr. Corby has plenty of sentiment to spare for the 'noble ends' of aircraft, for he is one of the perennial War Poets whose relevance to the current or any conflict is a matter of military fashions and place-names:

He was our friend, loyal yet fancy-free.
He now lies dead and wrecked in Germany.

Sonnet August 1940 has only its date to recommend it as contemporary, and *Villainy* is the sort of poem about knights, ladies, etc. that I thought had vanished with the nineteenth century. The

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author's digestion of experience is quite undisturbed by contemplation of the missions of beautiful bombers, and his general lightheartedness only yields to well-tested dramatic gestures:

> And neither think you go unmourned who go
> to death among the lost stars of the sky
> for there are many that you do not know
> whose hearts will have their sadness should you die.

Though he declares

> I will be seeker after truth, witness to deed
> though it be bitter as this pelting sky,

and disdains 'this printed posturing of fools', Mr. Corby is content for his grand effects with a heart-warming Churchillian ('On land, on sea, in sky') and Brookian idiom ('Oh God! Oh God!')—large helpings of 'England's honour', 'glory', 'the historic Thames' (twice), 'You did not die as these', 'those who give no alien earth their bones', 'awed eternity', and, as seasoning, a Grantchestery poem about London,

> as you come home on leave, at rest, at rest.

The contributors to *New Lyrical Ballads* favour a National Savings style ('brave hearts', 'every town and village in our land'), which is perhaps what they mean by 'a direct and active relation between poetry and life'. *New Lays of Ancient Rome*, one is inclined to suggest, would have been more suitable, for there is little sign in this volume of reorientation to authentic and actual speech, sensibility or life. The obtrusive Englishness ('Tom Kyd, Will Shakespeare, young Kit Marlowe too') is noticeably pre-industrial, the language is reassuringly familiar ('working the while', 'weapons of war', 'men and masters', 'common cause', 'All manner of', in a few lines), and cheering metaphor embraces more present problems:

> Here is the earth with her golden veins
> Sinews of steel and dormant warmth of coal . . .

Certainly these poets are performing the tasks of the moment—immunization against first-hand responses, writing moralities of the effect of the Pub on Production—with the adaptability that characterizes their peculiar allegiance, but they haven't much to do with the responsibilities of poetry. Their 'uniformity of purpose' doesn't mean any more maturity, or difference, in emotion.

Almost all the verse, of course, relies for even the most superficial consecutiveness and intelligibility on an ephemeral political context, and many of the writers cannot achieve coherence or articulateness:

> Working-people . . . steel . . .
> Freedom an oxy-acetylene lamp
> Burns out the filth of fascisms . . .
> Men and women . . . brothers . . .

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It is in the verse of the versatile Mr. Jack Lindsay, however, that the fundamental deficiency of the whole collection is most apparent —the absence of any convincing rhythm; as when another contributor says:

> Yet you must know, with us, that ultimately
> Machines are our servants.

Such Acts of Faith (Mr. Lindsay's—'The world comes up lovely again') do nothing to make themselves more than personal professions. Mr. Lindsay, when not rivalling Campbell ('Where are they now, the young and the brave?'), makes a habit of profession:

> I too have looked on England and loved England.
>
> * * * *
>
> I saw the future
> mirrored in the past . . . and there I heard
> the living voices which are freedom's voice
> this day in all the shires . . .
> . . . men and women saying: Unity
> against the fascists.

One hardly expected that culmination even after his Daily Worker Pageant of English Freedom. He doesn't tire of asserting

> Then two visions came to me.
> I saw the past. I saw the future too.

But one doesn't receive much illumination; except, incidentally, of the attitudes behind Mr. Lindsay's imagery:

> And all that the old moonstruck peasants dreamed
> Now became act and knowledge fused and hammered
> In one as steel-ore rivets to a bridge.

Mr. Lindsay's real co-star in *New Lyrical Ballads* is Mr. Paul Potts. As a co-operative pavement-artist or on his own pitch I think Mr. Potts can be relied on as spokesman for a view of the function of poetry in life shared by many of his fellow-travellers:

> I tried to graft a poet's dream dipped into verse
> On to the stem of detailed party agitation.
> They drive the train
> But we must get the people to climb on.
>
> * * * *
>
> To sing on—
> Until the world is Blackpool
> In August
> In the afternoon.

The significance of *Personal Landscape* does not reside in its contents, which, poetically, are no better and no worse than the many collections of English origin being published to-day, but in the fact of the persistence of the verse-writing habit, essentially

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unchanged, in unusual and unfavourable conditions (in Cairo). It is typical, too, in its large proportion of verse without specific internal necessity or direction, 'reportage' to which prose would have been less hampering, and only accountable-for by the inertia of mere habit. The rest is characterized by a certain amount of unattached goodwill and sympathetic responsiveness, and a good deal of ponderous expansiveness; for instance, the late Keith Douglas:

> For here the lover and killer are mingled
> who had one body and one heart.
> And death who had the soldier singled
> has done the lover mortal hurt.

Worth individual notice is Mr. Tiller, particularly his *Poems for One Person*:

> Grief is not you, nor are
> the form and inward form
> of you the thin despair
> that whispers of your harm.
> Still there are ways that leave
> no valiance at all,
> not of the mind but of
> the inward animal . . .

I can't see that this sort of involution and impalpability is justified by what is really offered. Mr. Tiller is skilled in weaving these cobwebs, from vaguely-tied relative and prepositional phrases, abstractions and duplicities. The reader's inspecting consciousness of the meaning's movement is debilitated (the secret of its rhetorical success); and so very often is the poet's. The verbal habit becomes, not only disproportionate, but, in fact, quite uncorrelative of anything he may have conceived—that is, virtually meaningless.

Mr. Tiller's method seems to offer big returns for a meagre capital and equipment, but on examination his is another simple sensibility—peculiarly inoffensive, contrast (his *Coptic Church* with Durrell's *Coptic Poem*) reveals. Contrast with Mr. Bottrall (both being apparently 'cerebral') reveals the difference between the cultivation of a merely verbal habit and the cultivation (in a deeper sense) of a poetic habit, integral, more the agent of the directions and reflections of Mr. Bottrall's mind, its limitations bound up with his inflexibilities and insensitivenesses. In some spheres, Mr. Bottrall's verse-habit persisting, his awareness limited, his conventions are inadequate and crippling. But that is only possible because there is always in his verse the effort to 'ériger en lois ses impressions personelles', to erect and establish for himself at least; for one cannot say he achieves anything of very much extra-personal (not to speak of impersonal) and general validity (his considerable accessibility, or 'interest', is another matter).

In none of the other poets under review can there be said to be anything of that nature. They are, one fears, all victims of

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the uncriticized prevalent habit of 'producing' verse, fostered by the unprecedented ease and volume of publication to-day. Publishers with intellectual pretensions give their sponsorship quite indiscriminately; barriers of public prejudice seem to have been largely broken down, and as in the musical world, the self-congratulation of the organizers disguises the fact that what the new audiences have really discovered is that the expensive narcotics are as effective as the cheaper ones (both, if one is tolerant, 'a mild form of psycho-therapy'). They haven't, unfortunately, anything to do with Reading or Listening.

It may be obscurantist to say so, but distribution of faint praise to the innocuous doesn't do much good. And since producing poetry is such a routine job, reviewing it can't be any better.

A. I. DOYLE.

NON SEQUITUR

A PLANNED ECONOMY or FREE ENTERPRISE: The Lessons of History, by E. Lipson (A. and C. Black).

The acceptability of Mr. Lipson's 'conviction', expressed in the Preface, that 'the historical method of approach can make its own contribution to the discussion of current issues', will depend upon the tenability of his assumptions: these are of two kinds, explicit and implicit, and it is proposed to discuss them before proceeding to an appraisal of the main argument of the book.

The title of the book itself raises two problems on the explicit side: is there in fact freedom of choice between 'planned economy' and 'free enterprise' and to what extent are there 'lessons of history' which can be applied to the present situation? As regards the first, even if one is not a social or economic determinist, the freedom of choice is illusory since the alternatives to social security and armed strength are social revolution and military submergence. Unless the present discouraging international situation is an irrelevant prelude to the substitution of right for might in the conduct of international affairs, there must be planning and it must be economic. It may be possible to differ on the speed and the methods but the principle is inescapable. If there is no choice—and the author admits towards the end of the book that there is none—the title, even if it is subtly ironical, is misleading.

On the 'lessons of history', the argument begins by a double reference to 'authority'; Ecclesiastes to the effect that 'there is no new thing under the sun' and Thucydides that 'the future will bear a strong resemblance to the past'. History is said to be 'a case book' which furnishes 'illuminating parallels' and the historian is presumed to be able to give advice of special cogency because he can take 'long-term views' and 'discern the design of the pattern'. Now authorities, even of Biblical status and Ancient Greek origin, can be misleading and the presupposition of historical 'laws' seems to

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indicate a confusion between history and science in which inviolable laws can be seen working themselves out to logical and demonstrable conclusions. As history is a humanity, concerned largely with imponderables, its 'laws' are probably imposed by historians themselves in anthropomorphic fashion, and they are certainly not susceptible of the metrical treatment which alone could raise them above the uncertainty of opinion. As will appear, Mr. Lipson is not sufficiently unbiassed to make either his laws or his lessons acceptable to the discriminating.

Further on the subject of lessons, the assumption on which the capacity to give and take advice depends, alike in the individual and national senses, is a more than superficial resemblance of circumstance. It may be achieved by indivuals, even of different generations, but it is questionable as to whether economic or political circumstances ever repeat themselves with sufficient exactitude to warrant similar action. In all the spheres of action which the historian may contemplate, the change of scale between similar problems presented to different generations constitutes a difference of kind, not of degree, particularly as differences are more significant than resemblances. In any case, nations or governments are no more likely to gain experience at second-hand than are individuals.

Case-law is a double-edged weapon since, if there is no new thing under the sun, there are precedents for everything. It will never be possible in any circumstance to say: 'On this occasion such and such a precedent may be followed because it is the *right* one'. Counsel on both sides have the whole of recorded history at their disposal and judges are not always remarkable for disinterestedness. The study of the past is not likely to supply rules-of-thumb, much less laws, for the conduct of present political problems and a few of Mr. Lipson's 'lessons' should suffice to show that a little common-sense would have taken him just as far as a lot of reading of history. 'In economics as in war it is the unexpected that is likely to happen'. 'Economics cannot be separated from politics'. 'Constant necessities of action must be accomplished by constant improvement of methods'.

The implicit assumptions are those concerned with the philosophy of history. In the Preface the historian is said to be able to 'discern the design of the pattern' and this design or pattern in the affairs of men seems to be ubiquitous. It crops up again and again in such phrases as 'the underlying trends of national growth', 'the general scheme of evolution', 'the unmistakable pattern in the affairs of the nation' and dismisses 'war or dynamic personality as exceptions to the pattern'. If these trends and patterns are so evident, it is difficult to see why there is so much disagreement about the various possible courses of action and tempting to suggest that theory tends to run after practice. *Ex post facto* justification is not a reproach to be applied only to international lawyers and theologians. Why, to employ Lipsonian metaphors, do men swim so suicidally against the historical tide or toil so bitterly up the historical slope? Why do they not 'handle problems in harmony

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with the historical pattern' instead of myopically improvising and sacrificing generations of themselves in the process? And if there is a design, Who or What is the designer? The 'fundamental traits in the national character' are rather vague: one is reminded of the remark made by Professor Pollard in his 'Factors in Modern History' to the effect that 'the rule of the game seems to be: When in doubt play national character'. If one of the traits is a love of precedents, nothing has been proved since there are precedents for everything and if two more are 'communalism' and 'individualism' they can hardly be claimed as exclusive to the Englishman since this dualism is common to the whole of civilized society.

The predilection for the abstract in design and characteristic continues in the treatment of the motivating forces of history. The author has a predilection for mechanistic analogies. From time to time he sees 'the rebound and the recoil of the pendulum', feels that in the design, though 'conscious human agency plays a part', 'imponderable elements shape our ends', that 'the cycle of ages' or 'the ebb and flow of events often bring mankind back to an earlier standpoint', finds evidence of 'natural forces of recuperation' unrelated to human policies and is conscious of 'a sort of rhythm' in the alternation of booms and slumps, all of which minimises, if not ridicules, the influence of man on his own affairs. A vague sort of determinism, presumably economic since Mr. Lipson is an economic historian, seems to be postulated without question, as though Marx had never been debunked or the existence of free will had been exposed as a mediaeval myth. 'The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' we are told 'may be regarded as the battleground in which religious and economic issues contended for mastery'. So they may—but so may most other centuries and if they are dismissed with an over-generalization, the significance of the personalities involved, the things which constitute the life-blood of history, disappears. If the historian's objectivity consists in gutting his subject, the validity of any contribution he may make to current controversy or to anything else becomes questionable. One is reminded of the fatuity of Tolstoy in dismissing Napoleon as irrelevant to the events of 1812 and wonders how long it will be before someone will regard Hitler and Churchill as irrelevant to the events of 1939-1945.

But in another and more important sense Mr. Lipson is not unbiassed and, being related to factors in the present, it has coloured his view of the past and led him to manipulate historical evidence in favour of his own prejudices. The method is what may be termed that of the pejorative epithet. He speaks of 'the *cramping* restrictions of communal society', of 'an environment *hidebound* by custom', of '*irksome* restrictions', of the '*triumph* of free enterprise', of 'state *interference*'. His sympathy with the free enterprise party is obvious from his description of the humanising of industry by private enterprise, of 'speculative undertakings as at once the hallmark of and primary justification for a capitalist system', of 'the prison house of tradition and authority' and of the 'monumental

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contribution' of free enterprise to the 'progress' of the nation 'Economic progress is more rapid' he says 'in a free economy . . . though it is often accompanied by grave social friction' and, saying that 'planned economy can be more ruthless than competitive forces', drags in red-herring references to the unpleasant but not inevitable accompaniments of planning in Italy, Germany and Russia. The man who takes long-term views should not take sides; his epithets should be merely descriptive, neither derogatory nor commendatory.

The treatment of the concept of progress may be singled out for further comment. We have already seen that economic progress may be 'accompanied by grave social friction' and are further told that 'for good or evil the forces of individualism . . . marked out the path of progress', as though progress were purely quantitative, without moral content. 'Progress consists of creating new wants' we are told, and 'the acid test of an economic system is the ensuring of the efficient use of the factors of production'. This may be sound economics, assuming the existing system as ideal, but economic values are not the only or most desirable criteria.

Having dealt with the assumptions, explicit in the Preface and implicit throughout the whole of the book, it is now necessary to consider the main argument. The new corporative tendency, we are told, is a return to the spirit of an older régime. England's first planned economy furnishes a background to our own problems, as England was organized on a communal basis for many centuries. In the Middle Ages, agriculture, industry and commerce were regarded more as public services than as opportunities for financial profit, and when, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, social disorder threatened, mediaeval municipal principles, communal in character, were applied to these problems nationally through such measures as Corn Laws, Navigation Acts, embargoes and subsidies. In that the motivation of this so-called mercantilism was largely strategic, the parallel with conditions in our own day is supposedly even closer but it is noteworthy that the exceptions with which Lipson qualifies his 'mercantile system' largely destroy it. Economic policy was, he admits, 'largely nebulous and opportunist', its principles applied 'with no consistency or uniformity' and its acts 'mutually contradictory'. If, as he says, 'economic life is not to be gleaned from the statute book', one can assert that mercantilism was, like feudalism, a later invention, a vague oversimplifying descriptive term, designed to describe departed phenomena, telescopic in its effect and perhaps even nostalgic in intent. Further, when he deals with the economic achievements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Mr. Lipson says that 'mercantilism was not the sole or even the main contributor' to them and it is obvious that in his view the most important factor was the speculative skill of the entrepreneur. While it may be possible to assert that the ideal of a planned economy existed, when the exceptions pile up to the extent that they do in the chapter 'The Growth of Free

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Enterprise', applying the test of 'by their deeds ye shall know them', the existence of the ideal is seen to be largely imaginary. In the Middle Ages, the domestic system, interlopers in foreign trade and enclosures are, in the respective spheres of industry, commerce and agriculture, evidence of the very antithesis of communalism. According to the author, there were widening markets, domestic and foreign, division of labour, the growth of capital expenditure as processes became more difficult, the use of credit and banking facilities, the existence of cartels, rings and trusts, of factories and of wage labourers: all these, together with the fact that the Industrial Revolution, far from being catastrophic, was 'part of a continuous process . . . the climax of two centuries of development' make it obvious that the planned economy of early modern times did not exist sufficiently definitely to constitute a parallel to what is now in the air. To say that there are common elements of concern for human welfare and for strategic security is merely to postulate the continuity of human nature and of the basic problems of existence. These do not take us very far.

Mr. Lipson celebrates what he calls 'The Triumph of Free Enterprise'. 'Fetters were sacrificed on the altar (*sic*) of economic progress' whose triumph 'lay in the logic of evolution'. From the end of the Civil War until the beginning of the ninteenth century, laissez-faire, the absence of principle ruled in economic affairs until 'visible social disintegration' and the 'militant labour movement' necessitated 'state interference'.

This is the first half of the book. As a commentary on five hundred years of English Economic History it is interesting but misleading, particularly as it is directed at the 'general reader'. For all this preamble to the main purpose of the book, an examination of present problems and suggested remedies, is pointless and suggests that the author is using his learning as camouflage for the propagation of his personal prejudice. The validity of his parallel hinges on this sentence: 'If at the present day the conception of a planned economy has gained in principle so large a measure of acceptance, this may well be due not only to a recognition of the altered conditions of world economy but also to an instinct—particularly potent in a precedent-loving people—that it is in harmony with our national heritage'. This recourse to the occult for an explanation of what is self-explanatory, this determination to find a paternity for an idea which requires none, is difficult to reconcile with the statement later in the book that 'free enterprise was destined to submerge England's first planned economy so completely that even the memory of it has vanished from our minds almost as completely as the open fields have vanished from our countryside'.

The second half of the book, in which Lipson the economist takes precedence over Lipson the historian, begins with an analysis of conditions from 1919 to 1939 and here again he contradicts himself. In one sentence of the Preface he says that 'in the inter-war years the lessons of history are writ plain' and in another that 'the years 1919-1939 are too short and singular to provide a basis for

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safe generalizations'. But he is on less historically questionable ground in describing the events leading to the Great Depression, in assessing the responsibility of various factors and even in submitting recommendations than in seeking dubious parallels. The general reader can profit from reminders of the multiplicity of the interests and principles involved even if he remains sceptical on questions of emphasis and relative responsibility.

The question of most general interest which arises is the relationship between economics and politics. As regards the Great Depression, the political situation is said to have 'undermined business confidence', which seems to involve a large assumption as to the priority of the chicken over the egg. On the other hand, the revival of economic nationalism in Europe is said to have been 'the root cause of political instability'. To complicate the issue, later it is said that 'economic nationalism is not entirely due to economic causes' and that 'one cannot distinguish between cause and effect'. This truism, together with the remark that economics and politics are 'like the two blades of a pair of scissors', comes a little late. Even then, when he considers the form of planned economy he thinks we ought to have, the author thinks that 'planning must be divorced from party strife' and that Parliament 'lacks qualifications and technical competence' to deal with economic matters! Surely if there is, in fact, a lesson of British history, it is that parliamentary omni-competence must not be impugned. Any claim which the country may have to constitutional pre-eminence resides precisely in the fact that an elected parliament, a debating society, an association of amateurs, has devised means for carrying on the functions of government in a way acceptable to the majority. Any sacrifice of efficiency which results is felt to be worth-while because the sense of personal participation in the functioning of the state is paramount in a so-called democracy. Mr. Lipson's 'national economic assembly' representative of 'all manufactures, trades, services and professions' might, to quote his own words from the section on the 'Drawbacks of a Planned Economy' 'if it involved the extinction of economic liberty . . . involve the extinction of political liberty'. This suggested separation of powers, besides being self-contradictory, certainly does not come from one who has studied his constitutional history'. There seems to be some conflict between enthusiasm for individualism and devotion to efficiency.

The conflict is resolved. After saying that 'economics can no longer be divorced from politics' and admitting that, since we are no longer free from 'the menace of invasion' laissez-faire is impossible, Mr. Lipson would have the state act as a shock-absorber and safety-valve for private enterprise. 'If our programme of national security involves economic preparations and if we cannot afford to run the risk of another great depression, then we may fairly conclude, not that free enterprise has 'broken down' but that in the special circumstances it needs to be supplemented by the collective agencies of the community'. 'Promptitude in applying appropriate remedies before business confidence is destroyed . . .

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is the essential conditions of success'. This is followed by a warning. 'It must be recognized, however, that the working out of a complete policy to control the trade-cycle will involve virtual control of the economic mechanism'. If, as he says, the 'time is ripe for greater state responsibility' in the interest of 'a minimum standard of living' and full employment, if, as he admits, among the defects of free enterprise is the fact that 'a substantial portion of the human race is under-nourished and lives in a degrading environment', if the old economic system was 'based on organized scarcity', the question seems to be: 'Why not?'.

The objection to a planned economy depends on the assumption that there is a norm in international economic affairs to which the present situation is an exception. We are told that the policy of bilateralism diverts the 'stream of international commerce' into 'artificial channels', that economic nationalism 'interrupted the normal course of buying and selling as moulded by the interplay of the forces of supply and demand', that the needs of rearmament diverted resources 'from normal channels' and that 'the failure of the economic mechanism' in the troubled inter-war years 'proves only that it could not cope with an abnormal situation for which it was never designed'. While the end of the freedom from invasion, as one factor in the 'normality', is admitted, there is insufficient recognition of the fact that the other factor, the virtual absence of competition, has equally disappeared. Comparative statistics of population, raw materials and productive methods indicate that economic advantage no longer resides in this country. It was only the fact of temporary industrial and commercial pre-eminence coupled with the accidental advantage of a natural frontier that made the economically self-regulating mechanism of laissez-faire work to our advantage in the nineteenth century.

The purpose of this review, however, is not so much to attempt to prove the wrongness of Mr. Lipson's political convictions as to illustrate the misuse of his subject by an expert. To the second part of the book, published as an independent contribution to current controversy, little enough objection could be taken, but in the book as it stands, there is too much evidence of tendentious abridgement, of bias, of misdirected expertise and non-sequential reasoning. Unless he can do better than this, the historian had better stick to the past.

The literary style betrays the same negative qualities as does the thought-content. The type of metaphor used has already received attention. Jargon,—'neo-mercantilism'—cliché,—'the ship of state',—and journalese—'the Scylla of economic stagnation and the Charybdis of abrupt social disturbances'—word-spinning and quotations from Omar Khayyam come no better from 'the leading economic historian of the period' (publisher's blurb) than from the daily press.

A. J. WOOLFORD.

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A DEBUSSY RECORDING

DEBUSSY: *Images; Gigues* and *Rondes de Printemps,* played by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Pierre Monteux (H.M.V.).

The attention of readers is called to this important recording of two movements from Debussy's last and greatest orchestral work. They are particularly interesting with reference to the development of Debussy's talent, for although they appear at first hearing to be rather improvisatory and rhapsodic, they soon reveal themselves as most subtle and complex examples of musical organization. They are at once less static and more linear than the very beautiful earlier *Nocturnes; Gigues* is a more difficult piece to listen to than *Fetes* from *Nocturnes,* but in the long run it is richer and more rewarding; its linear details though still short-breathed are both intrinsically more subtle, and more subservient to a structural purpose.

As Debussy's music grows riper structurally it also becomes less of a by-way in European music, more central to the French tradition. A detailed study of the late songs, sonatas and the orchestral *Images* makes clear that his developing interest in Couperin and the great classical tradition was evidence of a profound if unobtrusive modification in his attitudes to his art and experience. Moreover it is not merely the titles of these Images which remind one forcibly of Roussel and even Milhaud—he links up not merely with the past but with one of the central lines in contemporary French (and European) music also. Debussy's influence on contemporary music goes much deeper than the conventionally accepted impressionistic 'effects'; I'm inclined to think that as his late work becomes better known (it is not, for obvious reasons, as popular as the earlier things) we shall see Debussy not merely as one of the supreme geniuses of to-day and yesterday, albeit in the literal sense eccentric, but also as one of the really big figures in musical history. If I might put it in a personal way, until recently I was convinced that, despite Debussy's phenomenal genius and artistry, Fauré was the more central and important composer; now, though my admiration for Fauré has not decreased, I am not sure.

One hopes that these records will sell well. The performance is authoritative with all the flexibility of contour which a French orchestra might give it and which is even more important in this relatively linear music than in the impressionistic works of the period of *La mer.* The American recording is on the loud side as usual but beautifully transparent and free of what one used to regard as the inevitable American crudities; the terrific vitality of the *Rondes de Printemps,* and its structural intensity, come across brilliantly, and prove how wrong Debussy was when in his early days he said 'Nous ne sommes pas modernes' (though perhaps one couldn't expect him to be prophetic about himself). This version

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of *Images* should certainly be completed by the recording of the other three pieces of the cycle, collectively known as *Iberia*, particularly since there is now no other recording of the work extant.

W.H.M.

TIPPETT: Concerto for double-string orchestra (Private recording by Messrs. Schott and Co., conducted by Walter Goehr).

This is perhaps the earliest of Tippett's completely mature and representative compositions. The exciting polyrhythms of the first and third movements afford easily accessible evidence of the technical manifestation of the characteristic Tippettan buoyancy and show how organic is the link which he forges between idioms as apparently remote as that of the Gibbons string fantasias (with their extraordinarily subtle rhythmic ellipses), and the cruder sophistications of jazz. Such a merging of the contemporary in the traditional is of great significance for our music's future.

The slow movement begins with a long lyrical 'celtic' tune, modal and pentatonic in feeling, which indicates how for all his European sophistication Tippett preserves contact with the native English line represented by Vaughan Williams. The melody is extremely moving, and evidence of a simple lyrical power which Tippett does not frequently draw upon, but the movement as a whole seems to me less satisfactory than the two quick movements which flank it; there is some disparity between the nature of the melody itself and the tonal and rhythmic complexities to which it is submitted in development.

The recording is adequate. All those interested in contemporary English music will wish to acquire the records though they may for the time being have difficulty in doing so, as the records are in short supply.

W.H.M.

[Reviews of the British Council recordings of *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Planets* are held over till the next issue].

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